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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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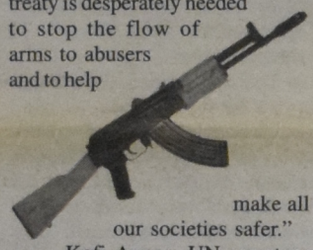
The real weapons of mass destruction: small arms

Harry der Nederlanden

Despite efforts to curb the global sale of small arms that reportedly kill a half million people every year, the weapons continue to proliferate. On Oct. 9 three non-governmental agencies – Amnesty International, Oxfam, and the International Action Network on Small Arms – met in England to launch a campaign to find ways to limit the trade of arms more effectively.

The availability of arms both increases the incidence of armed violence and prolongs wars once they break out, they argued. Moreover, they pointed out that efforts to fight international terrorism are actually stimulating arms sales, regardless of human rights or development concerns.

"The arms trade is out of control," said Barbara Stocking, director of Oxfam. "It is a global problem with horrific local consequences – and it is poor people who suffer the most. An arms trade treaty is desperately needed to stop the flow of arms to abusers and to help



make all our societies safer."

Kofi Annan, UN secretary general, has said the death toll from small arms "dwarfs that of all other weapons systems, and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms could well be described as weapons of mass destruction – yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread."

In a press conference, representatives of the three agencies pointed out that one-third of countries spend more on the military than they do on health-care services. The problem is particularly acute in developing nations. An average of $22 billion a year is spent on arms by countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. Just half of this amount would enable every child in those regions to go to primary school. Overall, 42% of countries with the highest defense burden rank among the lowest in human development.

Organizers claim that there are too many loopholes in current controls. They have drafted a treaty with the cooperation of other human rights and development agencies to provide a set of common minimum standards for the control of arms transfers, based firmly on states existing responsibilities under international law.

Religious conflicts

According to Elizabeth Kendal, Researcher for the World Evangelical Alliance, small arms are flowing freely wherever there is civil and religious conflict. At the height of the Maluku conflict, for example, weapons were being shipped into Java by the boatload. In the Congo, a doctor asked, 'There are enormous numbers of small arms in the area. Who is paying for these?'

"Africa is awash with small arms," writes Kendal, "primarily in the hands of Islamist militias and their supporters, and tribal militias (many deeply rooted in the occult) and their supporters. Rebel areas of Ivory Coast are flooded with small arms, and the supply of ammunition has been described as 'unlimited.' No one as yet has been able to prove conclusively who the suppliers are. We do know however that arms are funded or supplied by many Islamist organizations, as well as states or world leaders with ideological and/or financial interests in

*See **SmallArms** p. 2...*

Consecration of gay bishop divides Anglicans

In a solemn ceremony that has been repeated in countries around the world for hundreds of years, a stole and mitre were placed on a man and he was handed a shepherd's crook to symbolize his appointment as shepherd – bishop – in the Anglican communion. However, in this instance a large majority of the Anglican flock do not feel the man has led the exemplary life necessary for holding such office. He divorced his wife and left his two daughters to live with another man.

Nearly 4,000 people gathered in an arena at the University of New Hampshire on Sunday, Nov. 2 to witness the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, a diocese of the Episcopal Church USA.

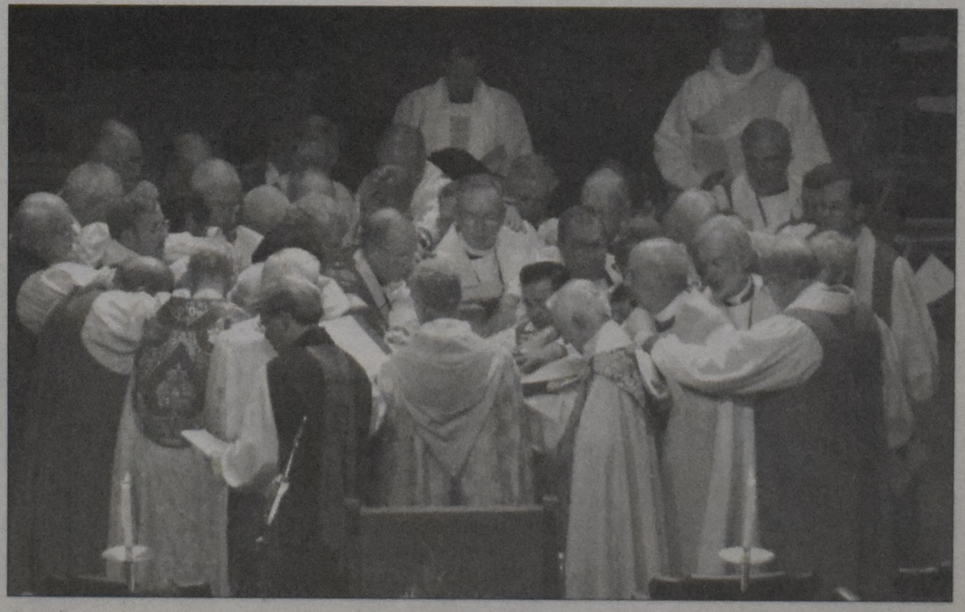
Many in the ECUSA celebrated the event as a sign that the church is becoming more open and inclusive. Others saw it as a surrender by the church to pagan values and an endorsement of immorality.

The American Anglican Council, the most prominent grouping opposing Robinson's candidacy, said, "Heresy has been held up as Holy. Blasphemy has been redefined as blessing. Holy Scripture has been abandoned and sin celebrated over sanctification."

Demonstrators, both pro and con, were lined up outside the arena watched by a large number of police officers as Robinson was led inside by bodyguards.

Bishop Frank Griswold, who officiated over the consecration, thanked "our brothers and sisters in Christ for bringing their concerns before us." But, he said, "The bases of their objections put forward are well known and I

*See **Bishop** page 3...*



Gene Robinson is consecrated as Bishop of New Hampshire

News

Small Arms

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supporting the conflicts.

"Likewise, small arms are freely flowing into Papua (Irian Jaya), sometimes on 'fishing boats' from Java, but more usually directly from the Indonesian military, just as in Maluku and Central Sulawesi. Islamists in Southern Philippines also are shipping weapons and ammunition to Islamic militias in Indonesia. Philippines weapons have recently been found in south Sulawesi."

Small-arms control

From July 7 to 11, the United Nations held a meeting to review the implementation of the 2001 "Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects." The Program of Action calls for a range of measures: legislation on illegal manufacturing, possession, stockpiling and trade in small arms; destruction of weapons confiscated; identification and tracing of the illicit arms; international cooperation and assistance to states to strengthen their ability to identify and trace the illicit weapons; and public awareness campaigns.

During the meeting in New York, a number of countries reported on new national legislation to limit small arms. Some U.N. delegates pointed out the need for greater international cooperation, pointing to cross-border proliferation and increasingly transnational networks.

An international survey on small arms, published during the meeting, revealed many problems still to be dealt with; however, only about 20 countries provided annual export. Sixty countries are known to be engaged in the legal trade. The survey said its estimate of the global value of small-arms production remains unchanged at about $7.4 billion. Peter Batchelor, the survey's project director, said the illicit trade is believed to be worth about $1 billion.

Africa today, he pointed out in a speech delivered in Nairobi, now has an estimated 30 million small arms in circulation.

"The majority of those guns are in the hands of civilians and insurgents," he regretted, and added: "The availability and misuse of small arms in Africa have undermined the continent's development prospects."

Working at the local level

According to a survey released in September entitled *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied, at* least ten countries in the region, including Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, have some domestic capacity to produce small arms and/or ammunition. But illicit production of small arms also occurs in a number of countries in sub-Sahara Africa, including Ghana and South Africa, says the report.

The non-governmental agencies want to bring the fight against small arms proliferation to the local level. Oxfam, for example, launched campaigns in Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Chad, Tanzania, Sudan, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Tanzania.

Gemma Swart, Oxfam's coordinator for Central and East Africa, said, "We have in the past concentrated on undertaking the mission in a purely conventional manner – government to government. We have now realized that local communities in the affected regions can contribute effectively towards battling the menace."

Women as peacemakers in Senegal

Valerie Stam, an intern with CRWRC, is currently in Senegal helping to train women leaders to mobilize others for peace, and mapping small arms circulation and zones of instability in Senegal. For over twenty years, there has been a "low-grade" conflict in southern Senegal. A rebel group is fighting for self-determination from the Senegalese government. The CRWRC is cooperating with other agencies to train leaders from the religious women's Organization Kabunketoor to go into villages and raise awareness about illegal weapons and conflict resolution. "These women have both the ear of the rebel group and the attention of the government," writes Stam. "They are well situated to influence both parties towards peace."

She relates that the women are well aware that the arms that help perpetuate the conflict are often produced in the West. She asks herself, "How much responsibility do we have in conflicts that are being fought far away?"

The issue is complex, however, for even when Western countries refuse to sell to certain groups or governments, others buy the weapons and resell them in volatile areas. (See the Advocate at www.crcna.net/cr/crjs/)

More arms spending but fewer conflicts

According to a congressional report released in late September, the US is not only the leader in arms production overall, it is also the leader in sales to the developing world. With total sales of about (US) $13.3 billion in conventional weapons, it sold $8.6 billion to developing nations. Much of that was, of course, larger weaponry.

In August, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) published its annual yearbook on armaments and international security. The study revealed that worldwide military expenditure accelerated sharply in 2002. Almost three-quarters of the increase in 2002 came from the United States, which augmented its military spending by 10% in response to the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The United States now accounts for 43% of world military expenditure.

There was some good news in the SIPRI report, however, contradicting the claim that the war on terror has aggravated arms proliferation and conflicts. In 2002, there were 21 major armed conflicts in 19 locations throughout the world. Both the number of conflicts and the number of locations were lower than in 2001, when there were 24 major armed conflicts in 22 locations. In fact, the number of major armed conflicts in 2002 was the lowest since 1998.

Small arms stunt development

The 2003 edition of the Small Arms Survey contends that small arms proliferation and misuse jeopardize human development in many of the world's most underdeveloped nations. Beyond deaths and injuries, small arms availability and misuse can often lead to economic collapse, damaged or destroyed infrastructure, and the withdrawal of private investment.

"Health, security, education, economic growth, and infrastructure all suffer where guns dominate," said Keith Krause, Program Director of the Small Arms Survey. "Even when the fighting stops, where the guns remain, the insecurity and fear continue."

Most of the small arms are in private hands. And the problems facing countries after an armed conflict often overwhelm them. "Half of newly pacified countries revert to war within a decade," adds the report.

The report documents a range of development-related impacts of small arms availability, including a rise in the incidence and lethality of criminality; the collapse or erosion of social services; a decline in economic activities; and threats to development interventions. In many developing countries, political and armed violence is not clearly distinguished from large-scale criminal violence.

Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Program writes in a foreword to the report, "[Small arms] have an insidious effect on development: by undermining the safety and security of communities, threatening livelihoods, and destroying social networks, they at best hold back and at worst contribute to the reversal of hard-won development gains."

[With stories from Project Ploughshares, the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, Small Arms Survey, Zenit.org, All Africa News Agency, CRWRC]

Some facts from the report:

- 500,000 people, one a minute, killed by conventional arms every year
- 639m small arms circulating in world today, produced by more than 1,135 companies in 98 countries
- In June there were 24m guns in Iraq, enough to arm every man, woman, and child. They could be bought for $10
- Over 59% of small arms are privately owned, 38% are in hands of government forces, less than 3% held by police
- Nearly 8m small arms made a year
- Up to 100m Kalashnikov rifles have been produced
- 300,000 children are fighting in conflicts around world. As many as 70,000 boys serve in Burma's national army.

News

Bishop

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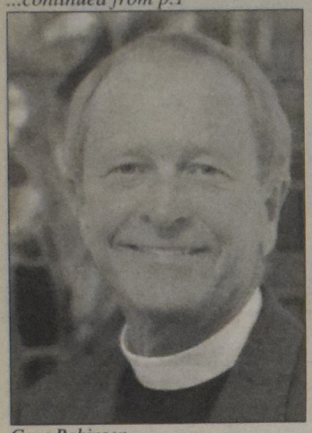


Gene Robinson

think have been considered."

He acknowledged that the move would cause divisions in the Anglican Communion, but he said that what holds the church together is more fundamental than one bishop.

"As Anglicans we're learning to live the mystery of communion at a much deeper level," he said.

The newly consecrated Bishop Robinson, in the gold and green robes of office, told the church his election was a sign to those "at the margins" of society.

"Your presence is a welcome sign," he said, "for those people to be brought into the center.... You cannot imagine what an honor it is for you to have called me."

He urged his supporters to be "hospitable, loving and caring" toward those who opposed his election.

His predecessor, Bishop Douglas Theuner said, "Because of who you are, Gene, you will stand as a symbol of the unity of the church in a way that none of the rest of us can. Your presence in the episcopate will bring into our fellowship an entire group of Christians hitherto uninvolved in these counsels of the church."

At a given point in the ceremony Griswold asked "if any of you know any reason why we should not proceed," three people spoke in opposition, including David Bena, suffragan bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany, N.Y., who read a statement signed by 36 bishops.

"We, the undersigned bishops, are registering our objection to the consecration of a person whose chosen lifestyle is incompatible with Scripture and the teaching of this church," he said.

"It is impossible to affirm a candidate for bishop and symbol of unity whose very consecration is dividing the whole Anglican Communion," he said. "This consecration poses a dramatic contradiction to the historic faith and discipline of the church."

Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, released a statement Sunday night lamenting the Americans' disregard for the objections of fellow Anglicans in other parts of the world.

"The divisions that are arising are a matter of deep regret; they will be all too visible in the fact that it will not be possible for Gene Robinson's ministry as a bishop to be accepted in every province in the communion," said Williams. "It is clear that those who have consecrated Gene Robinson have acted in good faith on their understanding of what the constitution of the American church permits. But the effects of this upon the ministry and witness of the overwhelming majority of Anglicans particularly in the non-Western world have to be confronted with honesty."

Vladimir Putin: a new tsar?

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

It has been just short of a dozen years since the Soviet empire came to a surprisingly quiet end after an eventful, and often horrific, 74-year run. Ten years have passed since the Russian Federation adopted its constitution in a popular referendum. In this brief time the country has sought to remake itself into a constitutional democracy. Indeed, its constitutional document borrowed features from both the American and French constitutions.

However, the mere existence of such a document cannot itself make Russia a constitutional democracy in the absence of supportive traditions. Given that Russia has little democratic experience in its thousand-year history, it is unreasonable to expect it to become a fully functioning democracy in so short a time.

Indeed there have been a number of discouraging developments in Russia, under both the Yeltsin and Putin presidencies. To begin with, both leaders have waged an ill-advised war over the break-away north Caucasian republic of Chechnya. This has diverted energy and resources that could have been put to better use elsewhere and for more constructive purposes. The savagery of the Russian-Chechen conflict has effectively alienated potential friends and allies abroad.

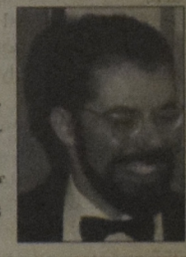
Moreover, in 1997 President Yeltsin signed a controversial and misnamed law, *On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations*, which imposed a number of legal restrictions on religious groups which could not trace their origins in the country beyond 15 years. This was done despite several constitutional provisions claiming to guarantee religious freedom.

When he came to power in 2000 Vladimir Putin created seven new "super-districts," over and above the 89 federal regions and republics, which were directly attached to and dependent on the presidency. This has had the effect of weakening the federal character of the country insofar as it has attempted to reduce the regions to something approaching mere administrative subdivisions.

Critics had already charged that Russia's 1993 constitution established an unbalanced separation of powers, with the bulk of powers going to the president. Putin has strengthened the presidency further in his nearly four years in office. Some observers now charge that Putin has reduced the State Duma, the lower chamber of Russia's parliament, to "little more than a discussion club with benefits." This might seem to compare favorably with the prolonged standoff between Yeltsin and his parliament in the 1991-93 period, but Putin's centralizing solution is hardly conducive to the flourishing of constitutional government.

Next month new parliamentary elections will take place, to be followed by a presidential election next year. Putin has broken precedent by throwing the support of his office behind the United Russia party in the Duma. He has further supported the establishment of breakaway parties that would weaken the communist opposition. If these moves are successful, Putin's control of parliament will be enhanced and the legislative body's independence further undermined.

Shortly before the end of the Soviet Union, famed novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote a political tract setting forth his vision for what he called a Russian Union. Recognizing the likelihood of an autocratic or even authoritarian chief executive in a post-communist Russia, he argued that his people might have to live with this for a time while learning democratic ways at the local level. In this way democracy would grow from the grassroots upwards. Although it is difficult to imagine a vibrant local politics emerging without some co-operation from Moscow, Solzhenitsyn was almost certainly correct to counsel patience in those wishing to see reform come more quickly. After all, if Rome wasn't built in a day, neither is constitutional government.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press).*

Conservative Anglican priests in Canada subject to discipline

In Canada, the infighting about the Anglican churches in New Westminster, BC that refuse to acknowledge the authority of a bishop who has introduced same-sex blessings has grown more vicious, despite attempts to mediate it.

The five metropolitans who preside over the five dioceses that cover Canada sharply chastised Bishop Terry Buckle of the Diocese of Yukon who accepted oversight for the conservative parishes of New Westminster. Disciplinary procedures have been initiated against Buckley which may lead to his removal from office.

Ironically, the man who initiated the discipline, Bishop Michael Ingham started the entire brouhaha by himself defying the policy of the Anglican Church against blessing same-sex unions, a policy earlier affirmed by the five metropolitans.

A statement issued by the five church leaders expressed sympathy with the effort to include gay people more fully in the church. It went on to argue that differences in theology need not bring division unless some people (conservatives) insist on it.

On the other hand, a bishop who seeks to minister to people in another bishops territory by going against church order is a serious thing.

The highest value celebrated in the statement is the willingness to remain in dialogue: "Such conversation, along the willingness to sustain it in trying times, is a costly and valuable gift we give one another," say the metropolitans. "On the other hand, the intervention of leaders from other parts of the Anglican Communion in the life of this Province, and the intervention of one Canadian bishop in the life of another diocese, contrary to the order of the church, have not contributed to our common faithfulness."

Bishop Ingham, having discovered the power of canon law, also took action against seven priests in his diocese who have refused to bend to his will. All lead congregations opposed to same-sex blessing. The official stance of the diocese is that it has nothing to do with same-sex blessing but with the failure of priests to live up to their pledge of loyalty to their bishop.

The seven priests, however, feel that Ingham has broken faithfulness with the Anglican communion and its teachings. It is they who are seeking to remain loyal. Also cited against some of the priests are statements they have made that certain actions were contrary to Scripture or church tradition.

The priests under discipline minister to almost one quarter of New Westminster Anglicans.

Editorial

God-talk in the public square

Harry der Nederlanden

Recently a newspaperman with a nose for scandal and a distaste for right-wing politics got wind that a pious American army officer, General William Boykin, was going around making speeches at churches. He got the general on tape telling believers in the Bible belt that he believed God had put George Bush in charge of the country for just such a critical time as this. He also talked about his own work in the military. He and his men, he said, were not just in a fight against flesh and blood but with Satan. At one gathering he even related an encounter with a Somali warlord who had boasted he was protected by Allah. After capturing the man, he told him that he was fighting for a false god, an idol, whereas he, the American general, was fighting for the true God.

The story raised quite a storm in the US media, liberals calling for his head and conservatives defending his integrity.

A couple of years ago, I suspect, the story that a Christian general was making the rounds in evangelical churches telling people how he was doing the Lord's work in his military role would have been too ho-hum to publish. Since 9-11, however, God-talk in politics has become both more common and more charged with impropriety and danger.

Boykin's words raised such a flap in the press, of course, because of the new context. The White House has declared repeatedly that its battle is not with Islam as such (for "authentic Islam is a religion of peace") but with an aberration, a perverted expression of it. So it's a liability to have one of your top generals portray it as a religious showdown between two faiths.

Moreover, critics of the Bush administration have been charging that Bush has been acting not out of a popular mandate but out of a divine one – at least in his own mind. Bush believes that he's in the White House because God wanted him there. Boykin's remarks deepen the suspicion of many that there has been a kind of take-over at the top by religious fanatics, motivated by only God knows what. Critics are alarmed by all the God-talk that is finding its way into the US president's speeches.

Among those critics are many Christians. In the pages of CC, for example, both Bert Hielema and Gerald Vandezande have expressed their discomfort with all this God-talk coming from a world leader whose policies they detest. I admit that I too haven't always felt comfortable with some of Bush's public expressions of faith.

Our discomfort with God-talk

I've asked myself why not. We Reformed folk have often berated Evangelicals for their inadequate worldview which led them to abandon politics to the secularists while they focused on saving the soul. Now that the Evangelicals have wakened up and one of theirs has actually become president, we wince when he witnesses to his faith. For those of us who don't agree with his policies, foreign or domestic, it is aggravating to see them being held up as expressions of the Christian faith.

So part of our discomfort with Bush's God-talk is that it is done in support of policies that differ from ours. Since we consider ours an authentic expression of faith, how can his be rooted in the same faith? Yes, the Christian faith has political implications but – we're quite sure – they aren't the implications that Bush and his backers have drawn.

But is this all there is to our discomfort with Bush's God-talk? Are we simply embarrassed to have him and his policies associated with "our" faith?

Or are we also uncomfortable with overt God-talk coming from any politician? Bush's pastoral speech to the American people after 9-11 was one thing. But to say that he felt God wanted him to be president and to suggest that in his War on Terror he is being guided by God and that God is behind America in this enterprise – isn't that a little too much? Shouldn't he keep God out of matters that strike us as being all too human?

To some extent we, too, may have become infected with the feeling that this kind of talk ought to be kept private. The conviction that God has called and led him to the presidency and that he is being guided by God sounds like Bush is claiming a divine mandate for himself. He is putting a divine stamp of approval not only on his election but also on his policies. That's somewhat hard to take for those who feel he shouldn't even have won the election and who take strong issue with his invasion of Iraq and his policies favoring the well-to-do. Maybe he ought to be less confident about having God on his side in such matters. It strikes us as unseemly and perhaps arrogant to claim too close an association with God in such questionable matters.

In fact, most of us have been influenced enough by the hermeneutic of suspicion to suspect that most things that happen in the political arena are driven by all sorts of dubious motives rooted in class, race, greed, self-promotion, nationalism and so on. We shudder to see religion and the reputation of our Lord associated with political policies that may have arisen by and large from base human motives. Looking back in history, we see that the name of God has been invoked to justify all sorts of abuses of power, from the defense of slavery to the exploitation of other classes.

Dangerous combinations

So we prefer public figures to be a bit more hesitant about invoking the name of God. It too easily lends itself to covering selfish deeds with high-sounding phrases or to courting votes.

On the other hand, if pastors can claim to have been called not just to the ministry but even to a specific church, why can't a president? And if one is to witness to the power of faith in the political arena, isn't it entirely proper that he speak of his conviction that the policies he's defending flow forth out of his deepest religious convictions? Isn't it inevitable that if we call for a Christian political witness (Mouw speaks of political evangelism), we will end up with such close associations between the name of God and specific political platforms?

Some speak of America's civic religion in which God is absorbed into a worldview that sees America as a Christian nation chosen by God to be a light and a force for freedom in the world. That can be a dangerous combination, for it blinds a people to their own peculiarities and errors, even idolatries.

So to keep others from co-opting God and faith for their diverging and invariably tainted ends, we incline more and more to avoid God-talk, especially on controversial public issues.

The trouble is that in doing so we play into the hands of the secularizers who would ban religion entirely from public affairs. Both Prime Minister Chretien and Paul Martin did that in the marriage issue, in effect saying that God is relevant to matters of personal morality but not to matters of state. In a *Faith Today* article that came across my desk just as I was finishing this piece, Bob Harvey in "Excluding God from Public Debate?" points to the ruling by BC's Supreme Court that the religious beliefs of public school parents may have no weight in any decision-making because "all schools must be conducted on a strictly secular basis."

There's a certain view of pluralism that reasons, since religious beliefs are radical and sectarian, the way to work together harmoniously is to bracket them out. They are a threat to the social fabric and must be confined to the private realm, home and church. This is not the kind of pluralism promoted by Gerald Vandezande, Citizens for Public Justice and the CRC Committee for Contact with the Government. They seek to make room for every faith to speak.

The critics are right, though. There is something dangerous about religion, something absolutist. In paganism the power of the ruler and of the priest are always joined to explain and defend the existing order as divinely ordained. The ruler and/or the priest have the authority of god. To obey them is to obey the gods.

God and his Son enter history not just to free us from personal sin but also to liberate us from this false kingdom and to inaugurate the Kingdom of God in politics. The servant king who came to establish this kingdom in our midst was born not in the center of power but in lowly Bethlehem. And when he preached his good news and showed the signs of his now and coming Kingdom, the authorities both Roman and Jewish nailed him to a tree with a mocking sign over his head that read "King of the Jews."

Since his coming, not just Christians but the entire civilization influenced by Christianity have had an ambiguous attitude toward any fusion of divine and human authority. Although the powers that be are ordained by God, this does not endow them with divine authority but it makes them responsible and subject to God's authority.

This radically redirects power and authority. An element of self-emptying and renunciation enters the picture. Now authority does not grasp for equality with God. It now seeks not to serve its own interests but those of others. It exercises its authority with a concerned eye for the widow and orphan. It becomes a sign not of violence and domination but of the liberty of the sons and daughters of God.

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Letters

Needed: pugnacious opinion-making

Dear Editor:

Reverend Ty Hofman is correct to lament the loss of a voice such as that of Jelle Tuininga. While at seminary some time ago, I never missed an issue of the *Outlook*. My favorite Tuininga column was one in which he critiqued those churches which placed floral arrangements on the communion table while not in use. Though some of his opinions were a little nuts, this, I thought, is a Calvinist who sweats the details. Bring it on, Jelle.

Hofman falls short in his prescription, however. It is not enough to invite Tuininga's voice back to the fold. It is not the absence of Tuininga which hurts the church as much as the abdication of vigorous and (if needed) pugnacious opinion-making by the present generation of Canadian reformed preachers.

On the American side, author/preacher Scott Hozee and, of course, David Feddes are making solid contributions towards contemporary reformed thought. Where are the equivalents from our younger clergy this side of the border? CC readers will recall a cadre of pastors who in these pages and those of *Vanguard* were not afraid to pick up the pen and attempt to engage the broader reformed community in meaty discussions of the faith. Unfortunately, most of these writers have either passed on or are on scooters awaiting transfer to Faith Manor.

The silver lining in all of this is the recent appointment of Neal Plantinga as President of Calvin Seminary. One of the most lively intellects in Reformed circles, he is committed to instilling pride in the ministry as a noble profession and in allowing classical theological education to do the heavy lifting. He has always stressed that one of the worst homiletical sins is that of banality, of gutting the gospel of much of its muscle and counter-cultural punch (in one memorable sermon critique of a seminarian he opined: "Everything you say is correct, doctrinally sound and theologically impeccable. Unfortunately, it was also boring.")

With apologies to Calvin Seerveld, an updated modest proposal for saving the CRC: Pay a professionally competitive wage (say, $80,000.00 plus benefits to start), toughen up the entrance requirements, assume a 20% vacancy rate for the church to be a good thing, make curiosity of the mind and facility of expression a pre-requisite for graduation and threaten immediate expulsion for anyone who adds Chuck Swindoll to their library. Then watch more of our brightest and best kids give a pass to engineering and medicine and reach for the black robes and the creative pen.

John A. Tamming
Meaford, Ontario

Wiser ways to use surprise $7 billion federal surplus

Dear Editor:

Finance Minister John Manley announced on Oct. 22 that the final calculations for the past year, ending March 31, showed Ottawa collected $7 billion more than it spent. The federal surplus was more than double the $3 billion he previously forecast.

This 2002-03 surplus reinforced complaints from the financially strapped provincial governments (including Ontario's Liberals who inherited a $5.6 billion deficit from the Conservatives). In Quebec City, the Premiers recently reiterated their demands for more healthcare dollars from Ottawa promised by the PM in exchange for provincial support for a Canadian "health council" that will monitor spending.

The Toronto Star rightly asked: "What would have happened to the extra $4 billion had Manley got his initial forecast of $3 billion right?" It also asserted: "Since the year is behind us, the rule is that the extra money automatically goes to pay down the federal debt."

The editorial should have stated that Manley is obliged to deal with the critical observations of Canada's highly respected Auditor-General, Sheila Fraser on the Government's financial statements for the year ended 3-31, 2002: "I have become concerned in recent years with certain misinformation on what happens to the surplus for the year....The surplus for the year does NOT automatically pay down the debt. There is neither any law nor accounting rule that requires this."

Ms. Fraser strongly believes that the Government's financial statements are "important accountability documents." She pointedly stated: "They need to be credible, understandable, useful and timely." I fully agree!

Clearly, the 2002-2003 surplus could be stewardly used for appropriate investments in affordable housing, anti-poverty measures, and health care.

Parliament – not Manley – should determine how to use last year's surplus. Our MPs should decide, in a free vote, how national crises (faced by the homeless, hungry families, and sick people) should be addressed.

Obviously, PM-elect Paul Martin should take the lead and spell out his budget priorities. Canadians are entitled to know his social-justice commitments, and how he proposes to use the surplus as well as the upcoming budget to advance the well-being of all, especially vulnerable families.

The common good is at issue.

Gerald Vandezande, C.M.
Scarborough, Ontario

Too pro-American

Dear Editor:

With some interest and a lot of patience, I read the lengthy articles by Harry Antonides about the root cause of anti-Americanism.

According to the writer it is very complex. That surprised me.

Maybe I am wrong, but I think it has a lot to do with the greedy politics of the US. Is it not amazing that a country that does so much good all around the world has so many enemies?

In those articles there is a lot of complaining about the press and many other critics of the US.

I wonder if it is possible to be so pro-American that we close our eyes to reality.

How can Antonides write about Afghanistan and Iraq as "liberated" countries? Wouldn't "devastated" be more accurate? Isn't he concerned that rebuilding is still not happening in Afghanistan?

Meanwhile, the rights and freedoms that soldiers fight for in other countries get lost at home. Thousands were jailed in the US after Sept. 11. They are not charged with anything and can be held as long as the administration likes. They are called "persons of interest."

Stalin used to send those kind of people to Siberia. That is why we called the Soviet Union an evil empire.

Terrorism is a terrible crime, but is it not also a sign of desperation and a weapon of the powerless? If the Palestinians received enough aid from the US to buy some tanks to prevent illegal settlements and maybe a few helicopters to pick off Israeli leaders on the street, they probably would not bother with terrorism.

Does it not matter that Christians in Muslim countries have suffered more since those two wars were started?...

Now there are 150,000 of his own people suffering in Iraq under great stress, not knowing whether they will ever see their loved ones again....

But Antonides felt that he had to congratulate Bush for his victory, and he still admires him.

How many moderate Muslims have become radicals the last two years?

Is it not better that the Americans get out as soon as possible and make monthly payments to let the Iraqi people do the rebuilding the way they want to do it?

Hans Katerberg
Gowanstown

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Jazz it up

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

It was Saturday afternoon and I had stopped into school to get a little bit of work done for the coming week. As I sat at the computer, I suddenly heard the din of random musical notes and the clanging-of-pots-and-pans racket that could only be one thing: a high school marching band. Across the street from our school, a Catholic school was having one of its Saturday afternoon football games.

I decided to walk over and take a look. Before me, a visual spectacle was unfolding. Two teams were taking to the field in bright red and yellow uniforms. The band was blaring its trombones and trumpets. The scoreboard was lit up with thrilling messages like "Go Team!" In the stands, people from all walks of life were dressed in their football watching ceremonial garb. And all seemed cheerfully oblivious to one central fact: That football is boring.

During the five-minute intervals between plays, they could feast their eyes on delights like the team's mascot and listen to yet another raffle draw for a two-for-one coupon to the Yarn Barn. A public announcer blared a series of statistics about both teams over the loudspeaker. The band unleashed its arbitrarily chosen notes. A little window dressing and suddenly the game was an exciting place to be.

The Vancouver Grizzlies, who (thankfully) left town a few years ago seemed to follow the same sports philosophy. Take a painfully dull event like an NBA basketball game and dress it up with sundry doo-dads and penny whistles so people can have something interesting to watch. I remember them shooting prizes like t-shirts into the crowd with a giant bazooka and watching the Grizzly X-Treme Dance Team light up the floor with suggestive calisthenics, all to the delight of the adolescent boys in attendance (the only ones who seemed interested in the game anyway).

Television networks also do a great job of jazzing up otherwise mundane sports events with entertaining gizmos. On a sports channel I recently saw a Senior's bowling event that could have passed for the 4th of July.

Forgive the bias, but it seems that some sports don't need the extras. During longer pauses in hockey games, for example, (such as TV timeouts), there are no dancing girls or cute contests. Just some music on the loudspeaker. Soccer games usually don't include team mascots pulling clever pranks on the sidelines. At the core, some sports are fundamentally exciting and worthwhile.

I've been tempted to dress up some things myself. Take my Bible class, for example. I've sat through enough dull catechism classes and spiritless sermons to be aware of how good some people are at making the Bible appear boring and insignificant. My reaction has been to try and spice up my Bible teaching with extras: skits, games, videos. What I haven't done is allow the Story of the Bible to speak for itself.

My buddy Johnny does. He's a high school Bible teacher, and students he's had still talk about how much his Bible class impacted their lives. His secret? Talk about the events of the Bible as they happened. Make it real. Allow it to speak into students' experiences, struggles, doubts. Be sincere. Ditch the "God Talk" rhetoric and start relating to people in a meaningful way.

In the middle of the din and racket, kids just long for something that's real and natural. We all do. We need the story of God and His people. The Only Story. No preservatives or artificial coloring needed.

Tim Antonides is back to teaching at Surrey Christian School in Surrey, B.C. after spending a year in grad school.

Forty-year slide

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE

Vern Gleddie

I recently attended the fortieth anniversary of my graduating class in agriculture from the University of Alberta. Most of us have gathered for a reunion every five years. This year there were two who finally made it for the first time in 40 years.

One was immediately recognizable – the only female in our class. As for the other it was funny to watch as he greeted people hoping for some faint sign of recognition. Five years ago it was another classmate's turn to show up incognito. Over 35 years he had lost most of his curly dark hair, gained 50 pounds and grew a mustache. A marvel to behold!

All of the class of '63 are still living, and there have only been two divorces. Family is obviously important to us all. It took a total of three hours for each individual (27) to present a "two-minute" personal history update. That included time for laughing and comments from the floor.

We learned from one of our former professors, of whom there were six present, that we are an exceptionally cohesive class. No other class comes near the turnout we experienced (only one missing). It was agreed that a contributing factor to our closeness was that we have much in common because we were all farm kids. Today many agriculture students are urban, and the remainder are mostly a small cog in the machinery on their family's hi-tech, highly mechanized and very large farms.

We had also become well acquainted during the first two years of our four-year program because we all took the same courses. So we spent the day together in class, moving from class to class, and comparing notes. Nowadays a typical student switches faculties several times before procuring a degree and in the process seldom connects with a group.

Government has abandoned research

We had come to the reunion prepared to see some effects of the ravages of time in our classmates, but were not prepared for some shocking news from the faculty of agriculture about research and education. The man who had been dean when we were students told us that government no longer provides research money. I think what he meant was that government has abandoned long-term projects such as soil test plots in place for over 70 years. He pleaded for alumni funding to save valuable projects.

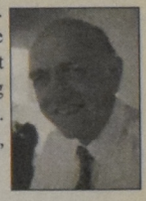
Then the current head of a department in the faculty of agriculture reported that there is no direct funding from government any more for any research. There is only matching funding from government institutions for industry-sponsored research. That means virtually all research has strings attached. All research is industry driven for industry interests. Social, spiritual and stewardship aspects get short shrift and try as it might it will be very difficult for the university to do integrated research. Thus the big picture will never show up in the faculty of agriculture on the University of Alberta campus.

Further evidence of government withdrawal from public service is that a student now pays 65 % of tuition costs compared to 25% 40 years ago. No longer is it possible for a student to put oneself through university with a summer job. In fact, any student who wants to put themself through university will incur a huge debt.

A fortieth reunion makes physical decline painfully evident. Our bodies have not been able to keep pace with our minds, which still think young. We can't do much about that. What we weren't prepared for was the revelation of decline in our alma mater; something that need not happen.

With government backing out of funding, the university has become the puppet of industry. Government and perhaps society in general do not understand that true education goes beyond obtaining a degree in order to find a job. Uncertainty and the industrial mindset are dehumanizing "higher" education.

We are slipping, sliding.



Small levy proposed to be placed on food to upgrade the environment

The Christian Farmers Federation's vision document has put forward a proposal calling for a small charge to be levied on the retail sale of food in Ontario "to pay for environmental services and joint farmer/consumer initiatives."

The idea was discussed and approved in 19 workshops held across the province.

Initially most of the participants were skeptical. They asked, "Who collects the levy? How will the money be distributed?"

During the workshops, participants felt that the idea would be resisted by consumers, farmers, politicians and retailers — in other words, just about everyone. Thirty-one percent thought consumers would resist because they have more pressing issues and the levy would be seen as just another tax. Twenty-five percent thought that farmers themselves would resist since it would make consumers more demanding; they expected vigorous squabbling about who would get the environmental payments.

Fourteen percent thought that resistance would come from other sources as well: from the general public because changing the status quo is a hard sell; from retailers because a farmer-consumer partnership could threaten their control; and from politicians because they would lose some influence. Participants felt that a farmer-consumer partnership — not government — should control the funds raised by such a levy.

Such a levy, participants concluded, would benefit the province in several ways: the environment and the countryside could be improved; the incomes and image of farmers would be boosted; consumers would be empowered to contribute to the environment and would gain from the development of a creative farmer-consumer partnership.

Eighty-nine percent of the participants at the workshops said they'd be willing to pay such a levy on food to create a new source income for farming and the countryside.

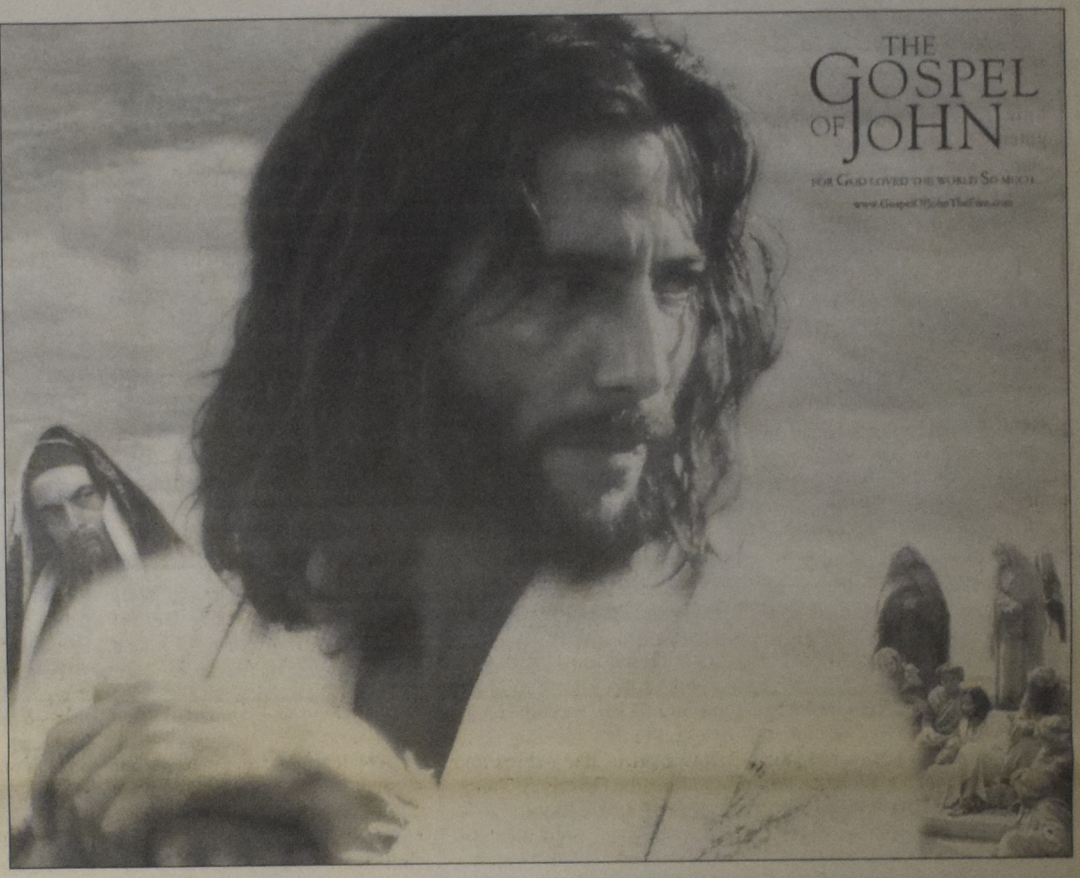
Elbert van Donkersgoed was encouraged by the response. "Many caught the vision," he wrote. "A small levy on food has the potential to be a powerful bridge between farmers and consumers — a strong enough bridge to balance the emerging economic clout of those very few large food firms that control food between the farm gate and the dinner plate."

The above is derived from Elbert van Donkersgoed's Corner Post for October 20, 2003. He is the Strategic Policy Advisor of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Canada.

Media

Portraying Jesus, Seeing Jesus

The Gospel of John
Reviewed by Ron VandenBurg
Starring Henry Ian Cusick, Christopher Plummer, Stuart Bunce, Scott Handy, Stephen Russell and Daniel Kash. Directed by Philip Saville, and co-produced by Garth H. Drabinsky and Chris Chrisafis.



Watching a Jesus movie put me with quite a different audience than I am accustomed to seeing in a theatre. The audience I sat with was mostly older, but some parents accompanied their young teens. While many other young teens stood in line for tickets to Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Kill Bill or Scary Movie 3, my movie choice was a three-hour historical drama whose screenplay is direct from scriptures. Not that I wish to have changed theaters with any of them. I just wish that some of them would have wanted to change with me.

Narrated with the quiet strength of Christopher Plummer, the first chapter of John begins the movie with a fireball sunrise over the horizon of what appears to be the Sea of Galilee, an appropriate image of Logos being part of creation and being an active image of God in creation. The sunrise camera shot transitions into a camera shot from Jesus' perspective. Here we see Jesus, as played by Henry Ian Cusick, blend in with the daily life around him, and here we see the director Philip Saville create the interactive setting into which the biblical story will be told.

The film does a very good job creating setting, with exterior scenes shot in Spain invoking the Judean landscape, with computer generated cities of the biblical Jerusalem, and with interior shots filmed in Toronto with strong sets, good lighting and detailed costuming. Quickly, the scene also comes to a key theme of the movie, "that his own will receive him not," as Jesus walks through these early scenes ignored by all those too busy to pay him any attention.

Centrality of Jesus

Following its mandate, the film used only scripture as its dialogue and narration in its screenplay. For me, soon it became like watching an acting troop performing a Shakespearean tragedy. As with Shakespeare, staying true to the biblical text causes some difficulties. For instance, Jesus stays the central figure (as he should), mainly because he is the one with the most dialogue. Exploration of those around him is kept to a minimum, unless they have an individual scene that identifies them. Even in the credits, some of these black-bearded, long-haired characters are still only given the name "disciple."

In discussions with his disciples or the temple crowd, Jesus stays dominant with only murmurs from the crowd of nodding, facially expressive onlookers. When confronted by the Pharisees, Jesus' speeches are presented so strongly that his opponents say nothing, with Jesus leaving in triumph. Looks of disbelief and awe about Jesus' words and miracles become the only way the rest of the cast speaks to the audience. The producers did choose the right cast members to do this, drawing from both the Royal Shakespeare alumni in England and Canada's Stratford Festival regulars. All of whom can murmur, exchange eye glances and sputter in disbelief very convincingly.

It's not hard to see that this film is destined for video/DVD church curriculum material. Watching the whole three hours, I saw it as an intensive study of the Book of John, with its themes being pushed forward by the film. For instance, I was surprised at the number of times Jesus says to his audience, "I tell you the truth" as he reveals an aspect of the kingdom of God. The director must have thought so as well because a close-up shot accompanied the statement each time.

Changed lives

Showing Jesus' power to change lives is another thread clearly presented in the film. We see Jesus encountering several key people during his ministry. Sometimes he seems to come out of nowhere to meet the person, while at other times the audience is led by a nonverbal introduction. The woman at Jacob's Well, the man at the pool of Bethesda, the blind man at the roadside, Nicodemus, Lazarus and Mary Magdalene are all seen as followers or spokespeople for Christ. For some, we see their lives before they encounter Jesus, and it is these plotlines that show the impact of Jesus' relationships, revealing who Jesus really is. These people stand as John's eyewitnesses to Jesus as Messiah.

Saville also gives each of these characters extra screen time to give added details of their lives after Jesus' meeting with them. All these extra scenes are in dumb show, as part of the general ministry of Christ, as part of a crowd or as a new member of the inner circle, wordless but present.

Also clearly portrayed in the film is how the temple crowds gathering for various Jewish festivals came to fight against Christ. As the mobs work at understanding Jesus, they turn from protecting him from the temple guards, to attempting a stoning, to a Palm Sunday celebration, to finally teaming with the Pharisees' anger to crucify Christ. Director Saville links motives of the crowd with the anger of the Pharisees, who are given the key role of discovering who Jesus is and rejecting the truth he presents.

With Mel Gibson's *The Passion* being released to wide audiences next spring, it's a wonder that this Visual Bible production hasn't also been attacked as anti-Jewish for this perspective of the Jewish leadership as villains. Even showing the redeeming qualities of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea just reinforces the evil intents of Unnamed Pharisees 1, 2 and 3.

Seeing Jesus' sufferings

Whether it's *Godspell*, a local Easter passion play or this film, the strength of presenting the story of Christ lies in the visual impact of seeing a physical body acting out the words and signs of Christ. The divine aspects of his ministries, the healings and miracles, all come off with good acting but nothing more. Jesus walking on water looks like nothing more than poor computer- generated effects. When he touches others and is touched in return, however, this brings a powerful realization of the Son of Man as human.

I saw his tears with the death of Lazarus, I saw his joy in the day to day, I believed how tired, how thirsty, how hungry and how lonely he was in difficult times. As the story culminates in his pain, his blood, his suffering and finally his death, we see the painful reality of man's inhumanity. I watched as blood dripped from the crown of thorns, I watched as Christ stumbled to Golgotha, and I winced hearing the words of Christ on the cross along with the taunts of the crowd.

Still, I don't know why all this surprises me, seeing the same cruelties every night on the news. Here, however I get the pain and understand that Christ did actually die for me.

John intended his gospel to be eyewitness accounts to reinforce the faith of Christians and to bring others to faith. Using the language of this gospel, *The Gospel of John* retells the story in this new medium, following that same mandate admirably.

The Gospel of John has a limited release in a number of theatres across North America and video/DVD offer. Produced by Visual Bible International, it is part of a project to produce all sixty-six Bible books in film format. *The Gospel of John* is the third movie, joining *The Gospel of Matthew* and *The Book of Acts*. For more information, visit the official website www.gospelofjohnthefilm.com.

Eritrean government confiscates church

LOS ANGELES (Compass) – Government authorities in the Eritrean capital of Asmara confiscated and sealed the complex of the Full Gospel Church during the past two weeks, ordering the church staff and members to evacuate the building permanently.

Located in the Gaza Banda district of Asmara, the large complex had served as the Full Gospel Church's main headquarters and meeting place for the past 11 years. The rented facility accommodated up to 4,000 worshipers.

An initial standoff over the government-owned complex began on September 17 of last year, when soldiers invaded the property at 9 a.m. and refused to leave, declaring that it was government property. Despite negotiations by church leaders, a contingent of five soldiers have remained in a section of the complex ever since, for the past 13 months.

But on October 15, the church staff and members were ordered by military officials to hand over the entire complex to the government. "They were told that as an institution, their church was violating presidential directives, that it was involved in an illegal 'cell-group' ministry," a local source confirmed. "They were told that the church will not get any property."

Since May 2002, the Eritrean government has refused to recognize the Full Gospel Church and a dozen other independent Protestant churches representing some 20,000 members. All have been ordered to close their church buildings and stop both public and private meetings for worship.

Locked in metal containers

Meanwhile, Compass has confirmed that of the 62 young people arrested and locked into metal containers last August for having Bibles in their possession at the Sawa summer military camp, all but six have now been released. None of the teenagers set free have been willing to discuss the terms of their release.

The six youths still jailed have reportedly been moved from containers to underground isolation cells, where there is no light, little air and limited food. They are allowed out once a day to relieve themselves.

"These arrested Christians don't care about what happens to themselves...but many are worried about what might happen to their parents now."

Another 12 young evangelicals from Asmara's Dubre Bethel Church arrested during a house prayer meeting on September 7 are still refusing to sign a denial of their faith to gain their release.

On October 5, the police again pressured the detainees' parents to persuade their children to sign the denial. While some declined, other parents complied, admitting their jailed children were the family's sole breadwinners.

"These arrested Christians don't care about what happens to themselves," a fellow evangelical noted, "but many are worried about what might happen to their parents now."

Little information has been learned regarding the fate of 79 soldiers in the Assab military prison, where most have been jailed since March 2002 for their evangelical faith. The detainees, 16 of them women, have received harsh, life-threatening treatment and been refused any contact with their families.

Following other arrests in recent months, a current total of 230 evangelical Christians are known to be jailed for their faith in Eritrea.

"The widespread and continuing arrests of prisoners of conscience, including peaceful political critics and members of religious groups, and their unlawful secret detention without charge, demonstrate a pattern of general disregard for the rule of law," Amnesty International noted in a September 18 press release highlighting Eritrea's human rights abuses. "Hundreds of members of minority Christian churches have been arbitrarily detained and ill-treated during 2003."

Only four "official" religions are permitted by Eritrean authorities: Orthodox Christian, Muslim, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran. Nevertheless, the government has issued a blanket denial that any religious persecution exists in the country.

Saudi prince orders jailed Christians released:

Two Egyptian Copts Freed After 10 Days

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL, November 4 (Compass) — Two Egyptian Christians jailed in the Saudi capital of Riyadh 10 days ago for leading a house church were ordered released this morning by Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud

Sabry Awad Gayed, a pediatrician working in a clinic in El Bat'ha for the past four years, and Eskander Guirguis Eskandar, employed as a carpenter, were arrested on October 25 on accusations of establishing a non-Muslim place of worship.

On the day of their arrest, Saudi police reportedly questioned why the two of them and Eskandar's brother had three Bibles in their possession. "Each one of us has our own Bible," the men explained.

After being registered at a local police station, the two men were put in jail. When brought before the prosecutor, they were informed they were accused of evangelism and "establishing a temple [non-Muslim place of worship]." However, the authorities produced no proof of either charge.

The two Coptic Christians have met privately for worship in homes with other expatriate Christians since they took jobs in Saudi Arabia.

Two years ago, their house church was investigated by a Muslim organization which came to inquire why they were staying at home and not attending Friday prayers. When the vigilante group found that the 150 people meeting together were all Christians, they left them alone.

After receiving a written complaint that two Egyptians had been jailed "for apparently no reason," Prince Sultan reportedly asked to see their file. The prince serves as Saudi Arabia's Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.

Just a week before Gayed's and Eskandar's detention, Prince Sultan was questioned by journalists, asking if the Saudi government planned to allow Americans to build churches in the Kingdom.

The prince was quoted in Riyadh's official newspaper as replying, "There will be no church built in the land of Saudi Arabia. But everybody has the freedom to worship in his own home."

According to Gayed's wife, Dr. Salwa Khalil, her husband and Eskandar were treated "in a respectful way" by the Saudi police during their imprisonment.

"I was able to call Sabry almost daily through the cell phone of some friend visiting him," she said, "and the police allowed him to answer." She is currently in Cairo with their two small daughters.

It is unclear whether Saudi authorities plan to allow the two Coptic Christians to continue in their job contracts, or if they will deport the men back to Egypt.

Call for Protestant creed in plain Dutch

Andreas Havinga

Amsterdam (ENI) – A top Dutch church official is challenging the future Protestant Church in the Netherlands to agree on a common confession of faith, written in plain Dutch and summing up what Protestantism stands for.

The call was made earlier this month by Bas Plaisier, general secretary of the Uniting Protestant Churches in the Netherlands (UPCN) – a grouping of the three denominations that are planning to merge next year to form a united Protestant church.

The proposed creed should be clear enough that non-believers can understand it, said Plaisier in a lecture to students at the Theological University in Kampen.

The text should be short, like the Apostles' Creed, occupying no more than "a couple of A4s," Plaisier said, referring to standard European letter-sized paper. The Apostles' Creed is an ancient summary of Christian doctrine.

In his lecture, Plaisier, who is himself Reformed, deplored that while "the valuable function of confessing [one's faith]" had been sidelined by many Reformed Christians in the Netherlands, it was considered gospel by others.

Some church members treat confessional texts as statutes inspired by God, and others dismiss them as totally irrelevant, said Plaisier, criticising both views.

"The confessional text has often been the measuring-rod with which to hit [someone] and not the shepherd's crook on which to hang the church's lantern," he said. As a result, "it is no coincidence that in our [Dutch] vocabulary 'Calvinism' has come to mean narrow-mindedness, melancholy and pedantry."

Plaisier is a member of one of the two Reformed denominations that along with a smaller Lutheran church are in the process of merging. The church union plan will be voted on by the synods of each of the three denominations in December. If the plan receives the required majorities, the new united Protestant Church in the Netherlands will come into being by May 2004 and will be by far the biggest Protestant church in the country. Plaisier said agreement on a confessional text, summarizing beliefs, should be a task for the general synod of the new church.

Church

Eastern European churches denounce proselytism

Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw (ENI) – Representatives of churches from Eastern Europe meeting in Poland have condemned the practice of proselytism – enticing Christians who belong to one church to convert to another – and have pledged to work together in evangelization and mission.

"We should never try to encourage Christians who belong to a church to change their allegiance by ways and means that contradict the spirit of Christian love, violate the freedom of the human person and diminish trust in the Christian witness of the church," the 25 church representatives said in a joint declaration issued after meeting held near the Polish capital, Warsaw.

The gathering was organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches.

Orthodox leaders in Russia, Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe have frequently complained, since the 1989-91 collapse of Communist rule, that other churches are honing in on traditionally Orthodox territory.

The participants attending the meeting in Poland said the credibility of churches had been damaged by "divided witness," which spread confusion and proclaimed "the exact opposite of the message" they sought to share.

"The new freedom the churches have been experiencing since the end of the communist era has weakened the strength of unity that they found in facing together the oppression of an atheistic ideology,"

They argued that recovery from communist-enforced atheism in Eastern Europe had been impeded by "a new agnosticism of the neo-liberal and secularised world," and they underlined the need for united efforts.

"The new freedom the churches have been experiencing since the end of the communist era has weakened the strength of unity that they found in facing together the oppression of an atheistic ideology," noted the document, drawn up by members of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical, Oriental Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholic churches.

"Since our common opponent in Communism disappeared, our churches have been moving in different directions," said Zbigniew Kubacki, a Polish Jesuit who helped organize the meeting. "But this encounter shows we still share many problems and opportunities in post-communist Europe."

Proselytism has been repeatedly condemned by the Geneva-based WCC, as well as by the Roman Catholic Church, whose 1967 statement, "Ad totam ecclesiam," defines it as "a manner of behaving contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, which makes use of dishonest methods to attract persons to a community – for example, by exploiting their ignorance or poverty."

Islamic dress codes imposed on Christian schoolgirls and nurses

Nigeria (AANA) – In Kano State, all girls – including Christians – attending state run schools are to be compelled to wear the Islamic headscarf. Meanwhile in Azare, Bauchi State, 12 nurses have been fired for non-compliance with a dress code based on Islamic law (sharia).

The directive does not apply to schools run by Nigeria's Federal Government or to private schools. However since most private Christian schools in Kano have recently been forced to close, Christians are left with little choice. The schools were closed on the grounds that they do not meet required state standards; these standards include employing imams to instruct in Islam.

Unlike the previous governor of Kano State, the present governor has made clear his intention to apply sharia more vigorously. Whilst making a stopover at Malam Aminu Kano International Airport, the president of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir, pledged any necessary support for the governor to fulfil this aim, so that all the other northern Nigerian states would follow Kano's example.

An example of Sharia dress, however, this is more of an office outfit.

In neighboring Bauchi State, 12 Christian nurses who refused to wear new uniforms designed to comply with a sharia based dress code were fired recently. The Christian Fellowship pleaded with the Nursing Service Dept. in Azare to let them carry on wearing the traditional nurse's uniform, but they were told it revealed too much of their legs.

Calvinists in Belarus for 450 years cannot obtain recognition

Geraldine Fagan

(Forum 18 News Service) – Baptists, Pentecostals, other charismatics and Adventists held a joint service of worship in Minsk October 19 to mark the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Belarus. While there were "hundreds of Calvinist communities" on Belarusian soil in the sixteenth century, however, the presbyter of Minsk's present-day Calvinist Reformed Church told Forum 18 that the authors of the republic's 2002 law on religion "forgot about the Calvinists for some reason." The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the only Protestant body specified as being "inseparable from the common history of the people of Belarus" in the preamble of that law.

Finally registered on June 18, 2001 after a "very long and complicated" process, the 50-strong Minsk Reformed Church chose to mark this year's 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Belarus with an international conference on the subject in early April. While the event went ahead, it did so only with difficulty.

Three months before the conference, the church arranged to rent a 350-seat hall, but about a month before the event the Calvinists learnt that under current legislation they were obliged to request the permission of the local Central District administration in order to hold an event at a public venue. They still had received no reply to their request just one week before the conference, which was due to be attended by guests from the Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine, Germany, South Africa and the Czech Republic.

The official in charge of religious affairs in the city told the church that they had no right to conduct an international conference since their organization was not a republic-wide religious association. A local Baptist pastor offered the use of his church for the conference at the last minute, but the Calvinists were unable to advertise the event in the overwhelmingly state-owned press since it took place on an unofficial basis.

The Reformed Church's difficulties did not end with the conclusion of the conference. While discussing the event's arrangements, officials made a note of where they worship, and shortly after the conference two of them visited the church during its Sunday service at the Francysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Center.

After state pressure was apparently exerted upon the proprietors of the center, the Minsk Reformed Church was forced to seek another location for its services. As with its conference, the Church has not been prevented from functioning, Aleksei Frolov acknowledged to Forum 18, but is now effectively unable to advertise its presence in the Belarusian capital: "We cannot say that this Church exists, preaches Jesus Christ and doesn't bite."

Zimbabwe urged to halt human rights violations

Geneva (ENI) — The World Council of Churches, deeply concerned at "the deteriorating law and order situation in Zimbabwe," has urged the country's government "to take immediate steps to restore the rule of law and put an end to arbitrary arrests, torture and killings."

The world's largest grouping of churches said on Tuesday it had sent a letter to Zimbabwe's justice minister, Patrick Chinamasa. In the letter, the director of the WCC's commission of the churches on international affairs, Peter Weiderud, asked for "an immediate enquiry into the case of Mrs [Beatrice] Mtetwa and others who have been the subject of police brutality" in order to "ensure that justice is done to them."

On October 12, Mtetwa, a lawyer who has defended journalists and others in human rights cases, was taken into police custody after calling the police about an attempted car-jacking. When she was released from Harare's Borrowdale police station, the WCC said, she needed medical treatment for severe bruising and cuts to her face, throat, arms, ribcage and legs.

The WCC in its letter noted that during 2003, there had been an "unprecedented increase in incidents of police harassment and brutality against human rights defenders and members of the judiciary."

It said the most recent event was the assault of Mtetwa. The letter cited other violations against people in the legal profession.

The WCC's central committee, one of the council's top governing bodies, which ended a meeting in Geneva in September, had said: "The violence, intimidation, unlawful arrest and torture perpetrated by the police, ruling party militia and other state agents must come to an end."

Opinion

Kids of the kingdom

Berta Hosmar

In the fall issue of *Wavelength*, I read that the Back to God Hour's ministry to children will be the focus of this year's winter spotlight.

Our churches have become much more aware of the needs of the younger generation.

When I see children come forward during the Sunday morning worship service to gather in front of the pulpit before they go to their respective classrooms to hear a brief message, often enjoyed not only by the children, but by everybody, I conclude that many churches are indeed child-friendly.

Church does not have to be boring for children anymore. They will remember as they get older what they have been taught in church school, also due to the excellent material that is available to their teachers.

It was very different when we, the older generation, were growing up.

In my native Holland we were faithfully taken to church every Sunday morning, and by the time we were 8 or 9 years old, we even went twice.

Yet, I have to admit that I can't for the life of me remember much about those church services, except for the two peppermints we were allowed to suck on, plus the fact that we had to sit reasonably still for a long, long time.

Often our imaginations helped to pass the time. Did God live right above the chandeliers? Were there people hiding behind those curtains up in the balcony where the organist was playing?

What if the minister fell off the pulpit when he was gesturing so wildly? Wouldn't that be neat?

Sometimes we dozed off.

But one fragment of a sermon I heard during those growing-up years did stick in my mind. It was during a New Year's Eve service; the minister ended his sermon with an emotional appeal to his flock "This year will never come back. It is gone forever. So please, let your last deed in this dying year be a good deed!"

I realized that for once these words were not only meant for grown-ups, but also for me, so I decided right then and there that I would share a tiny part of my New Year's Eve goodies with my younger sister.

Looking back, you wonder why churches were not more aware of the needs of young children in those times.

Other denominations held Sunday school classes, but that was unheard of in our local church. When a neighborhood friend, whose parents had started to go to the Salvation Army, bragged to me about the good times she had at Sunday school, I concluded that Sunday school was only meant for the heathen, for my friend attended a public school. We went to a Christian school, and at home my dad read to us from the children's Bible.

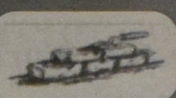
I don't think these regular, but for children utterly boring, church services damaged us for life or perhaps turned us against churchgoing in general. Yet, as the years passed, it has become more or less obvious that we had seldom been taught to share our faith with others.

Once, just before emigrating to Canada, our church choir, of which I was a member, decided to join the local Salvation Army band for an evening. By way of outreach we sang at all the main intersections of our town, while the Major of the Salvation Army shared the gospel and called people to repentance.

...continued on p. 11

On Working Women

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



If you are a conscientious reader of the Building Trust column you will have noticed a small error in last month's article. One of the names of the women in the stories illustrating the difference between a connecting interaction and a disconnecting one was wrong. I am a perfectionist (a flexible one I hope) so I need to point out my mistake. I was trying too hard to meet the deadline for submission. It was the second column I had written because the first one ended up in the wastebasket.

I actually spent quite a bit of time writing that first article, the one I wound up discarding. I didn't use it because, as I was writing, I started questioning myself. I was discussing an article I had read in the Dutch magazine *Elzevier*. But in the process I started asking myself why anyone reading the *Christian Courier* would be interested in an article from a Dutch magazine? I decided not to use it.

But being slow to give up on ideas, here I am giving it another try. After all, it is not important who writes in what magazine. More important are the ideas that are expressed. There was food for thought in the ideas presented in this prominent national Dutch magazine.

Women inferior workers

It was the front cover of one of the May issues of *Elzevier* that caught my attention. It pictures a woman leaning on her hand looking very bored under a caption which reads: Women Do Not Want to Work. The inside story is splattered with numerous slogans describing women in negative ways: "women are lazy, women are sick, and women have no motivation." The introduction states that a woman appointed as the new CEO of a well known firm is not Dutch but American. "Dutch women do not make it to the top because they are not motivated" it says, implying that women from foreign countries are clearly more ambitious.

The article is lengthy and keeps putting women down. It states that women who are deciding to work outside the home are taking advantage of social programs by working only the minimum number of hours required to be eligible for benefits. Women who stay home to raise their children are sponging off their husbands or off the government. Women are calling in sick more than men. Women are staying home from work when their children are sick more often than men. Women are taking more extended leaves of absences. The article concludes by stating that, all things being equal, employers would be unwise to hire a woman over a man. Statistics back up these generalizations. The article is written by a woman.

What about the bigger picture?

Being somewhat sensitive to the way women are portrayed in society, I got quite excited upon reading this article. A number of questions came to mind. How is it possible to get away with portraying one half of the human population so negatively? How could such a thing be deemed acceptable? Would similar negative claims ever be made about the male population?

I can't answer these questions because I don't live in Holland and don't have a handle on what is happening there. However, I am inclined to think that gender issues are as relevant in Holland as they are in the rest of the world. My inclinations were confirmed when I noticed several letters of protest in the next issue. Angry women blamed men for not doing their part in raising the kids. They also blamed the government for not adequately subsidizing child care.

There are a number of issues here. The big one is that women are portrayed as being bad no matter what they do. They are bad when they go to work and they are bad when they stay home. Another issue is that the roles of men are not discussed. The bigger picture in our changing society is not addressed.

Historically the value of the work of women has often been measured in terms of its usefulness to the economy. When workers were needed, women were encouraged to join the work force outside of the home. Conversely, when workers were not needed, women were encouraged to stay home. The value of the work of women has often been a function of the usefulness of that work to the economy.

Changing roles

It reminds me of the situation in the nineteen forties, during and after the war, when there was lots of work and women were encouraged to go out and do it. During the fifties on the other hand, women were encouraged to stay home. During the sixties women felt frustrated with being expected to be at home. They wanted choices, in part because raising children, though it has always been important to them, was not really a socially valued activity (they were "just" housewives). As a result they started the women's movement, became educated and began to strive for equality.

In the process women became more valued as persons. Raising children will always be an important part of their lives but it is no longer their only role. Men are adapting to these changing roles. The process is not easy for anyone. It means learning to relate as men and women in mutually enriching ways rather than in prescribed ways that have role expectations.

I suspect that the market place in Holland needs workers. I also suspect that women are not rising to the challenge as expected. That is not because they are lazy and bored. It is because of many other factors. The male dominated work force is hard to penetrate and men have a hard time staying home when the kids are sick.

I am reminded of a book by Paula Caplan entitled *Don't Blame Mother* which talks about the bind women get into because they do most of the raising of the kids and then get blamed for the problems the kids have. But I see a different future ahead. One in which all of us work equally hard at sharing the joys and pains of raising children as well as keeping the economy going. This challenge will never be easy. But then it never was.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to cntact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vickyv@telus.net

Senior Care

Empowerment tips for novice caregivers

Lisa M. Petsche

If you are new to caregiving, you may be overwhelmed, worried about your ability to handle all of the responsibilities involved in looking after a frail loved one. Following are some tips to help you in this very important role.

Accept

- Accept the reality of your loved one's illness – that there is nothing you can do to stop or reverse it.
- Give yourself permission to experience all of the emotions that surface. Grieve losses, but don't dwell on them.
- Let go of any bitterness resulting from unrealized plans and dreams, so you can move forward and channel your energy in positive ways.
- Recognize that there will be good days and bad days, and what you can give may vary from day to day. Don't be too hard on yourself.

Learn

- Educate yourself about your loved one's diagnosis, and share the information with family and friends to help them understand.
- Be open to learning practical skills such as proper transferring and bathing techniques, in order to make caregiving as safe, easy and pleasant as possible for both your loved one and you.
- Find out about community services in your area that can help maximize your loved one's independence and assist you with necessary tasks.
- Potential sources of information include: your loved one's family doctor and other health professionals involved in his/her care, books, videotapes, caregiving magazines, the Internet, the non-profit organization associated with your loved one's disease (for example, the Parkinson Society), your local Community Care Access Centre, and other caregivers.

Communicate

- Involve your loved one and other family members in decision making as much as possible.
- Keep the rest of the family informed of changes in your loved one's status and any decisions that are required. Don't act as if things are okay when they're not.
- Develop a partnership with involved health care professionals, sharing information about your loved one's needs, abilities, personality and preferences, asking questions, seeking advice, and offering opinions and suggestions.

Prepare

- Find out what to expect during the course of your loved one's illness, in terms of symptom progression and the caregiving skills, medical equipment, and community supports that will likely be required.
- Talk openly with your loved one about his/her wishes regarding living arrangements, outside help, substitute decision making, medical intervention and end of life care, and funeral arrangements. Be careful, though, not to make promises you may not be able to keep (such as promising you will never consider placement in a care facility).
- Help your loved one get his/her affairs in order, including completing paperwork such as advance directives, powers of attorney, and a will. Consult with a lawyer who's familiar with eldercare issues.

Simplify

- Keep a caregiving log so you don't have to rely on memory when it comes to your loved one's medical history – for example, medications tried and results, acute illnesses, hospitalizations, tests, diagnoses, treatments, and surgeries.
- Keep relevant medical, financial, legal, and other documents organized in a binder or filing system for quick and easy access.
- Seek ways to streamline your life. Set priorities and stick to them. Let go of the need for perfection.
- Take things one day at a time so you don't become overwhelmed.
- Learn to live in the moment and focus on simple pleasures.

Practice self-care

- Look after your health: eat nutritious meals, get adequate rest, exercise, and see your family doctor regularly.
- Find something relaxing you can do to give yourself a break at home, whether it's quietly enjoying a cup of tea, reading something uplifting, writing in a journal, calling

a friend, or listening to music. Make it a daily habit.
- Schedule regular respite from caregiving duties – for a couple of hours, a day, or overnight.

Connect

- Stay connected to friends and outside activities. Don't lose yourself in the caregiving role.
- Find at least one person you can talk to openly, who will listen and empathize. It's important to express your thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative.
- Talk with other caregivers, who understand better than anyone else what you're going through. Join a community support group (some offer concurrent care), or an online one if it's hard to get out or you prefer anonymity.

Seek help

- Acknowledge your limits, recognizing that you can't – and shouldn't – do it all alone.
- Accept offers of help. Ask other family members to share the load. Be specific about the kind of help you need.
- Research and take advantage of respite services in your community, such as day care programs and facilities that offer temporary residential care.

Advocate

- Ensure your loved one's needs and wishes are taken into account by health professionals when they're developing a plan of care.
- Join a local or national caregivers' organization – for example, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (http://www.ccc-ccan.ca) – that offers education, information, and support to family caregivers and advocates for their needs. Keep in mind that there's strength in numbers, and join forces with others like you. You don't have to travel alone on the caregiving journey.

Lisa M. Petsche is a freelance writer and clinical social worker specializing in caregiving issues.

Kids of the kingdom

...continued from p. 10

I vividly remember how I, and several of my friends, felt rather embarrassed standing on the sidewalk, fervently hoping that none of our friends or co-workers would recognize us.

Today our youth has been taught to reach out into the community. I don't think they are ashamed to invite unchurched friends to their youth services.

For the older generation it's not always easy to identify with their music, and, for that matter, the different worship styles in our churches. Comforting, familiar hymns with their rich meaning often speak more to us than praise songs whose lines have to be repeated many times. Recently I attended a service at a church of a different denomination. During a time of praise and worship we had to sing the chorus: "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes Lord" at least ten times.

The line seemed to speak to the congregation. People became ecstatic and started swaying and dancing in the pews, but, hard as I tried, that chorus did not speak to me at all. It only made me feel uncomfortable and even a little irritable.

Yet, I'm thankful that the needs of the younger generation are being met today in many churches, and that young children have their own special moments during the church service.

When they are asked questions while sitting on the platform, their answers delight the congregation, but they also show that God is very real to the children.

Once our grandson from Port Elgin visited us and joined the group at the front. When asked if there were any visitors, he put up his hand.

"Does anybody know where Port Elgin is?" was the next question.

Deathly silence. Everybody was thinking hard. Then a hesitant little hand went up.

"No, but God knows," was the solemn, consoling answer.

And when our 6-year-old granddaughter, a real tomboy, ever ready to defend herself with her fists if necessary, was punched in church by a friend, she immediately rebuked him with the words: "You are really mean to me, and that in God's house!"

We may chuckle, like any proud grandparent, but at least young children seem to sense that God is in their midst at church.

And when our young, deaf grandson, whose hearing has been partially restored by a cochlear implant, sat beside us one Sunday and sang the words of a praise song out loud, and when we noticed by his delighted expression that he could hear himself sing, I instantly started to like this particular praise song, no matter how often we had to repeat the lines!

We don't know if our children or our grandchildren will follow Jesus during their journey through life, but when we look around us, and remember the many countries at war, where children grow up hungry and fearful and learning to hate, we can only be thankful that the Spirit has made churches in countries where there is freedom of religion that are aware of the need to reach children with the Gospel in a language they can understand.

Berta Hosmar lives in Whitby, On.

Opinion

Who is in charge of this world?

Bert Hielema

Who is in charge of this world? Easy, you say. After all, we sing, "He's got the whole world in his hands," don't we?

Not so fast. I read the other day in a book by a Jewish Rabbi that there are seventy ways of reading the Bible, one for each year of one's life. About right for me, not counting the first five years when I could not read.

Ephesians 6 says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world. In plain language this says that we have to use all our imagination to be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws our way. God's great adversary should never be underestimated. He is very clever.

C. S. Lewis was right when he said that the way to hell is smooth, slightly sloping, no dangerous turns, easy on the mind. Paul writes to the Ephesians: Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued.

The kingdoms of this world

That's why I find Matthew 4:8-11 so interesting: the Devil takes Jesus to a very high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. There Satan tells Jesus: "All this, all these kingdoms, and all this splendor, I will give you if you bow down and worship me."

Somehow – the fellow is powerful – Satan makes to pass before the eyes of Jesus a gorgeous and magnificent scene: not just the poor lands of Palestine, but all the glorious highlights of Rome, the wonders of Greece, the treasures of Persia, the pyramids of Egypt, the Mayan Empire in Mexico, the miracles of the Incas, the architectural treasures in China and Java, the Far East with its beautiful temples.

Surprisingly the Devil says, "All these things will I give to you, if you will fall down and worship me."

The fact is that Satan's claim is based upon certain unquestionable facts: the kingdoms of the entire world have become largely under Devilish control. They were and are at the moment submissive to his will, obedient to his laws, captive to his bidding.

Going back in history, we now know that the Incan and the Mayan civilizations offered children to their gods. We know that the Romans crucified Christians and used them in the arenas as prey for the wild animals. We learned from the Bible that the Greeks scorned the approach of Paul and ridiculed his claim to resurrection.

In league with the devil

And today it is no different. Every week we read in the *Christian Courier* how Christians are persecuted in many areas. Recent history points to a Stalin, a Hitler, the holocaust, the cruelties of the Khmer Rouge, each causing the death of millions. This fall General Romeo Dallaire's book will be published. It is called *Shake hands with the Devil, the failure of humanity in Rwanda.* Confirming my thesis.

Durer – The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit

Satan's influence is not confined to wars: global warming is part of that too, so are the millions killed each year in automobile accidents and felled by cancer. Satan, as Jesus acknowledged, later calling him 'the prince of this world', has, at this point, the upper hand. The fact of his sway is indeed undisputed. He was in charge of the world in Jesus' time and he is today, exercising authority over all who are in darkness.

Frankly it pays to be in league with the devil. He constantly is posting a rich reward to those who serve him. If Judas desires 30 pieces of silver, the devil will find them for him. On condition. Wealth, fame, power, position, all are in the gift of the devil.

And so, in effect, Satan declared to Jesus that, whether the people knew it or not, they were at the Devil's bidding, that he, indeed, was the prince of this world. And so he offered to Jesus the whole of the kingdoms, the glory of them – on one condition: if only Jesus would but render homage to him. Satan said that most others had already submitted to his direction to gain some imagined advantage, and now he boldly suggested to Jesus that he should do the same.

Infinite cost

Believe it or not: the temptation meant more to Jesus than even Satan in the deepest reaches of his subtlety could possibly understand. It was impossible for Satan to fathom the current and future nature of Jesus' terrible suffering. Christ, of course, knew that his father had assured him these kingdoms, but he also knew the coming unutterable agony and immeasurable darkness: the cross and the grave, his descent into hell. The fierceness of Satan's proposal lay in the suggestion that all the splendor of these possessions might yet belong to Jesus without going through the pathway of shame and suffering and death.

Not that Jesus entertained or meditated for a single moment the possibility of yielding to the foe, but the Christ saw into the very heart of its meaning. He understood even as the Great Tempter could not, the infinite cost at which he was yet to possess the world.

Of course, Jesus answer was short and to the point: "Get lost." It was a command. And that's exactly what Satan did, after hearing that there is only one way to go: worship the Lord Creator and serve him.

To worship is always to serve. The enemy did not ask for service, only worship. Christ knew that worship and service go hand in hand. Had he worshiped Satan, he also would have been in his service, as the first Adam found when he was deceived.

The allure of this world

Satan promised kingdoms. Kingdoms have a degree of glory and splendor. Bush has Airforce 1 and the White House and Camp Davis. Chretien has his Challenger jet bought from his friends at Bombardier; he has his official residence and a retreat at Meech Lake. But being a politician always means lying and deceit. Even Tony Blair is finding this out.

Worldly affairs are always permeated with evil. We know that only too well. There is not for nothing a hearing in London into the tragic death of Dr. Kelly, who committed suicide.

The seeming beauty of the world is purely material at the expense of the spiritual. Lotteries may advertise their allure with the slogan, "Imagine the freedom." We know that sort of freedom is bondage and people end up worse than before. We live in a paradise world, but it is a fool's paradise. The splendor of the world is not lasting.

Kingdom and kingdoms

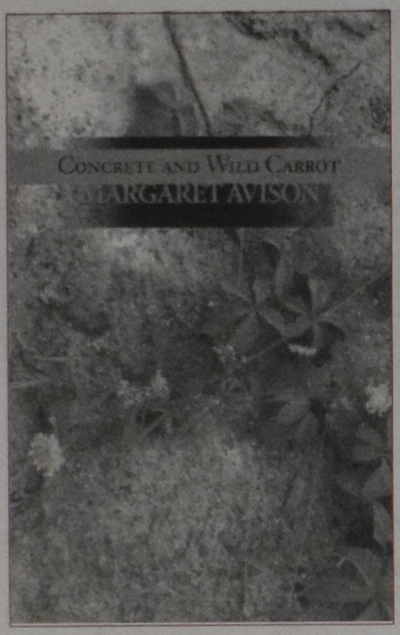
What Christ promises is not kingdoms in the plural, but kingdom in the singular. Says Revelation 11: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." Jesus chose to move toward the establishment of one kingdom and one throne. The devil showed the Master the kingdoms, tribes, divisions, containing the elements of conflicts and break-ups. Jesus refused them. He did not desire the kingdoms.

He had come for the Kingdom with a capital K. He refused the tarnished glory of a wrecked ideal and chose the radiant splendor of the kingdom to come, the New Creation, even though the pathway to the goal was the pathway of the cross.

We don't hear too much in the church about the kingdom to come or of the New Creation. We must realize that the great phrase in Revelation – 'the kingdom of the world'– means the actual cosmos. Says John 3:16, God loved the cosmos so much that he gave his only Son to redeem it. Redeem means 'to buy back.' Jesus bought back the entire cosmos from Satan, the land on which we live, the rivers and seas on which we

Review

Margaret Avison: an occasion of beauty



Harry der Nederlanden

Margaret Avison, a Christian poet who should be familiar to readers of CC, was awarded the Griffin Poetry Prize. It is accompanied by a prize of $40,000 the largest in the world for poetry. The judges described *Concrete and Wild Carrot* (Brick Books, 2002) as "an occasion of beauty" that is "alive in its sublimity and humility," noting that every poem is imbued with a "rare spirit of disorderly love."

"For many decades she has forged a way to write, against the grain, some of the most humane, sweet and profound poetry of our time," said the judges.

It was the third year for the prize, established by Griffin to encourage poets and bring their work to a wider audience.

On receiving the award from Scott Griffin, the founder of the prize, Avison said, "What makes you write a poem is so remote from this kind of honor."

Avison won the Governor General's Award in 1960 for *Winter Sun*, in which the religious themes are below the surface, and again in 1989 for *No Time*. Her conversion and faith commitment first became explicit in her 1966 collection of poems titled *The Dumbfounding*.

Avison's poetry is at times dense and difficult to read, especially for those expecting the equivalent of rhymed hymns paraphrasing biblical truth. To read Avison's poetry is to wrestle with the ambiguous, contradictory and often opaque material of human experience in an attempt to strike sparks of insight from flint.

We are no longer Adam in Paradise naming the animals, able to perceive the divinely created essence of things. We live in a fallen world in which social and political realities and our own categories of understanding obscure reality. Any light is achieved only after prying apart and reassembling the texture of experience and language. Hence the concentrated muscularity of her lines. Yet, the gift of light is wrested from the given world again and again, in most unexpected ways and places.

The title of her latest volume, *Concrete and Wild Carrot*, reflects two dimensions of her landscape– the hard, concrete surroundings of the city, where most of us live our lives, which is nevertheless constantly pried open by the forces of nature, wild carrots.

Let's glance at the first poem in the collection as an example, and to whet your appetite for more. "Pacing the Turn of the Year" illustrates what Avison does well in many of her poems. She draws our attention to Spring as the season of renewal, something of a poetic cliche. She evokes bare twigs that sprout into soft buds, "*like newly shampooed children being/ readied for the party.*

But as we join those out strolling, biking, basking or otherwise "exuberating" outdoors, we suddenly find ourselves commemorating the end of the Second World War. Our eyes are turned from the soft pussy willows to the dark oak:

Rusty tatters left from far-off August's
leafy towers and gables
the deeps and fullness, the amassing
in gloom and shadow of
greenness; now
ruined arthritic knobs and wrenched
limbs; next to nothing now
covering his nakedness.

From the perspective of war and the remembering of brokenness and violence, we are forced to reread the language of Spring. A poem celebrating the renewing, reviving features of Spring has become much more dense and troubled.

It becomes less about nature than about the texture of time and history. I'm reminded of Oscar Cullmann's use of the war analogy to explain Christian eschatology. To those who wonder why, if Christ has won the victory over sin and death, there is still so much violence and misery in the world, Cullmann suggests that Christ's victory is like the big battle that breaks the back of the enemy. The fighting may continue long afterward, but the outcome of the war has been decided.

This is the kind of tension Avison's poem (and others as well) makes us aware of.

In other words, we need to take care where in creation we root our commemoration and celebration. Hope requires more than the usual – cliched – optimism with which we greet the signs of Spring and renewal. It requires a time of preparation, depth, sinking in – the traits exhibited by the tattered, patient oak.

Those of us who have heard and read stories about the Nazi occupation and the long war will agree that the poem rings true. Even in defeat and in the darkest time, faith kindled a trust that god does not abandon us to the forces of evil. People of faith endured, waited, believing on the basis of what they had learned from the long story of God's workings with us that a Day of Reckoning would come. Solzhenitsyn's writings are filled with the same sort of rugged hope.

But it illuminates life in general. We all like robins and pussy willows and fresh, green buds as the vehicles of hope and continuity. But we do better to look to the laboriously stored memory and patience of the oak.

I'm allegorizing a little too much here, but the poem hints at a new sense of time, an eschatology that we may and must discover in the very cycles of creation.

If you're looking for a gift for someone who loves excellent poetry, you can't go wrong with Margaret Avison. Several of her books are still available from Brick Books, London, Ontario. See www.brickbooks.ca

The author: Margaret Avison

Who is in charge...*cont'd*

sail, the air in which we fly, together with all that lives and moves and has its being.

Under the perfect reign of Christ, all the splendor of material things will be beautified and perfected. In the final victory, the whole creation, which today groans in agony under the rule of Satan – who is out to destroy God's creation with us as willing helpers – will be redeemed, put aright, restored to its original beauty.

Real estate

Jesus came to restore creation. We were created to help in that goal. God made us so that we might act in co-operation with Jesus for the fulfillment of God's divine purposes.

Worship is Service. We, as members of his body, operate outside the sphere of Satan, most of the time. He constantly tries to rope us in as well. Prayer, fellowship, daily devotions, constant vigilance, keeps us in Jesus' realm and away from Satan.

Yes, he is in charge of this world. Now more than ever, as we see in this world where troubles multiply and sin becomes more flagrant.

We know that Jesus is the ultimate owner. We know that he has redeemed the world, that is, bought it back.

How should we view today's situation? Compare it to a real estate deal. You know when you buy a property you make an offer, and when all the conditions have been met, the offer is final, but the deal has not yet closed, you cannot move in until that is done. That's how I see the world at this point.

Jesus, on Calvary, removed all the conditions. The deal for us to become owners of creation has become final. He bought it for us and paid for it, but we do not have possession. That will come when Jesus comes back. In the meantime Satan still occupies the house of creation and tries to afflict as much damage as possible, because he knows his time will soon be up.

But we belong to Jesus. The Church is Jesus' body. We have no part of Satan's rule. How then shall we live. Peter gives the answer: "Because the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the Day of God and speed its coming."

Doing business with the Ten Commandments

John M. Boersema

For many Christians, the Ten Commandments (or Decalog) rightly form a major part of their response to the question, "How then shall we live?" Gilbert Meilander has noted in *Love Taking Shape*: "Time and again, Christians have turned to it for help in discovering what it might mean to live as God's people and followers of Jesus." Within these commandments," J. Douma writes, "lie the fundamental pointers we need for our concourse with God and our neighbor." It has even been referred to as the "Constitution of the Kingdom of God."

These commandments, found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and summarized by the Lord in Matthew 22:37-39, have been a major tool in catechetical instruction in many churches. The confessions of the Christian church and commentaries on them, consequently, provide helpful elucidation of the biblical teaching of God's law. I have found the Heidelberg Catechism particularly useful.

The importance of the Ten Commandments is, however, not limited to our personal walk before God. I have found them also of immeasurable help in teaching us how we ought to conduct our business. Let me provide some examples of how the Ten Commandments can be applied to doing business in accordance with Scripture.

The first commandment – "You shall have no other Gods before me" – is, of course, preeminent. Putting our ultimate confidence in wealth or profits amounts to making idols of these goals and must be rejected. While the Bible certainly does not condemn wealth as such, materialism – the making of goods one's god – must certainly be rejected. Much of secular management theory teaches us that the objective of business is to maximize profits or shareholders' wealth, but the first commandment encourages us to reject this as our prime motivation.

In addition, it cautions us against catering to consumerism – the constant striving of our society to acquire more and more goods. The first commandment, thus, also has implications for advertising.

Managers in business must also be cautious about how they exercise power. It is easy to idolize oneself, one's role or one's firm and to "take advantage of one's possession of power to play God to those under one," warns J.I. Packer.

Employees, too, should not be encouraged to love money; this has implications for variable compensation schemes which overemphasize individual bonuses.

The fourth commandment focuses primarily on the day of rest. While I recognize that views on sabbath observance differ among Christians, I personally believe that this commandment implies that Christians in business should reject all unnecessary Sunday labor and provide opportunity for their employees to attend the Sunday worship services.

In this commandment, the Lord also reiterates that work is expected of us, since "in six days you shall labor and do all your work." This commandment, thus, highlights the importance of job-creation, an issue important not only in the areas of economics and politics but also in setting the objectives for business.

The fifth commandment – to obey our father and mother and, as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, "all those in authority over me" – has implications for the view of the law we hold in our business ethics. Secular ethics sees a significant distinction between ethics and law; in fact, it is argued that "some laws have nothing to do with morality because they do not involve serious matters." Since breaking the law involves disobedience to the government that God has put over us, Christians, however, must recognize that such disobedience is itself an ethical issue. Obviously that has implications not only for dealing with such things as taxes but also for all kinds of regulations relating to safety, environment, etc.

The sixth commandment – "you shall not kill" – teaches us the high regard that God has for human life. This has repercussions for decisions concerning product safety. Christians must, for example, go beyond the strict contract view of a business' duties to the consumer and take due care that as much as possible any potential safety issues are resolved. They will also need to be extremely cautious about resisting government efforts to regulate product safety. Similarly, they should also be committed to providing safe working conditions and safe environments for neighborhoods around their plants. Pure utilitarian considerations are not enough; utilitarianism cannot adequately measure the cost of lost lives.

The seventh commandment about adultery would seem, at first blush to have no implications for business. However, a moment's thought would suggest implications for human relations and marketing. As a minimum, employers need to avoid creating work-place opportunities for extra-marital affairs. When we consider the Heidelberg Catechism's commentary that God "forbids all unchaste acts, gestures, words, thoughts and desires, and whatever may entice us to unchastity," the implications are even greater.

Christians in business must not only take these norms into account in considering the products they choose to produce and sell but even more so in deciding how to promote them. We must distance ourselves from the tendency of modern advertising to ever extend the frontier of sexually titillating advertising.

The eight commandment – "you shall not steal" – also has major implications for business, as the Heidelberg Catechism makes abundantly clear. It says: "He [God] forbids not only outright theft and robbery ... [but also] cheating and swindling our neighbor by schemes made to appear legitimate, such as: inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God."

The implications of this command seem obvious, at first glance, but it serves to sharpen our ethical sensitivity in many areas, such as when discussing manipulative or misleading advertising. What about the case, for example, of a developer who lists condominiums for a price of $70,000 while he actually expects them to sell on average for $65,000? Is it then "theft" to sell for the full list price to an elderly lady who is ignorant of real estate practices?

The references in both this commandment and the sixth to the welfare of our neighbor encourage Christians to reflect on competition.

Lord's Day 40 of the Heidelberg Catechism says that the sixth commandment requires us "to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful and friendly toward them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies."

In business, that must apply also to competitors, for they are also our neighbors. We must ask ourselves, "Is it possible to compete and be a good neighbor? And how, if at all, must a Christian's way of competing be different from a non-Christian's?

The Heidelberg Catechism adds that in the eight commandment, God also "forbids all greed and pointless squandering of his gifts." This relates this commandment directly to Christian stewardship and justifies our efforts towards "good management." All other things being equal, we should certainly strive for effectiveness and efficiency in business.

The flipside of the commandment not to steal, also confirms the importance of work, which we already noted in connection with the fourth commandment. Eph. 4:28, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work ..." makes this connection explicit.

The ninth commandment, concerning false witness teaches us (again in the words of the Heidelberger) to avoid "lying and deceit of every kind . . . [to] love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it . . . and do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name."

This Word has obvious implications for Christian businesspeople in selling, advertising, public relations and more. Honesty should be basic to Christian business dealing. "The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight. (Proverbs 11:1;16:11)" Not only are customers entitled to receive the quantity promised but this command includes by implication that they also receive the product quality they have been led to expect.

With regard to accounting procedures, honesty and integrity (representational faithfulness and freedom from bias) are essential. Moreover, in information systems, the prevalence of espionage, piracy and sabotage present major challenges. Similarly, operations research provides scope for dishonest, biased studies. In capital budgeting, this is also a common problem, since it is so easy to adjust uncertain estimates of future cash flows to attain a predetermined required rate of return. Honesty and integrity are also fundamental to contractual agreements: agreements freely entered into must be kept.

Although non-Christians may feel they can occasionally get away with dishonesty and fraudulent actions, we know that God sees all things. 1 Chronicles 2:9, for example: "for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thought."

This applies not only to our dealings with customers, suppliers and employees but, of course, also to our tax dealings with the government. Christians, therefore, will reject mere utilitarian considerations. Motives, the basic virtues such as honesty, are important in themselves.

Finally, the tenth commandment – "You shall not covet . . ." – stresses that not only sinful acts but even sinful desires are of concern to God. This should, for example, make Christians in business cautious about using "life-style" advertising intended to foster or appeal to consumerist desires. Caution is also in order when considering promotions involving such things as draws and lottery tickets which may stimulate our desire to possess, our covetousness.

Hopefully, these illustrations have provided ample proof that the Ten Commandments can serve the Christian well in developing a Christian perspective on business. In my teaching of business, I have found that they can be invaluable aid in the classroom.

Some of the resources used:

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On being vs doing

Judy Cook

Why is it that in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) there is a much stronger emphasis on "doing" for God and each other than on "being" with God and each other. The CRC has excelled in establishing Christian schools, organizations such as the Christian Labor Association of Canada, missionary outreaches such as the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and theological training for its pastors that emphasizes intellectual acumen and preaching skills, sometimes at the expense of spiritual nurturance and relationship building.

A person's (and by extension also a community's) sense of self is developed and grown on the basis of messages one receives throughout one's life about "being" and "doing." In our western culture girls traditionally receive more positive messages about who they are (being) than do boys, who receive more positive messages about what they do. For example, little girls hear approval through comments such as, "You look pretty," whereas little boys more often hear comments like "Wow, good catch!" However, a good sense of self develops best if children of both genders are affirmed equally for who they are as well as for what they do.

Part of why the CRC has continued to emphasize doing over being can be attributed to its governance history. Historically, all leadership positions within individual churches, within its classes and synods, and within its parachurch organizations, were held only by men. Although women, through their particular socialization, were often more adept at relationship building than men were, the importance of relationship building was often neither understood nor promoted by the men in charge.

Change of focus

Thankfully the skewed emphasis on doing at the expense of being is slowly changing. In children's social development it has become more acceptable for girls to DO and excel in sports, for instance; boys are now allowed to express who they ARE more by wearing jewelry or by allowing themselves to be vulnerable and shed tears, for example. Children hear less often that "big boys don't cry" and that "she's such a tomboy" than they used to.

Thankfully as well, some pastors and other leaders of the CRC have begun to understand the importance also of being with rather than mostly having a focus of doing for the congregations they are a part of. It is instructive for us to remember that God revealed himself to Moses first as the great I AM, not the great I ACT.

Jesus came as the Immanuel, i.e., God with us. To be "with" someone denotes a relationship. Jesus called to himself disciples in order to have a close community of companions and friends around him who could learn from him by watching and asking questions as he went about demonstrating the will of his Father. Jesus demonstrated what a church ideally should be – a koinonia, a community which talks about and shows how God is restoring the world to a renewed relationship with himself, a relationship characterized by love, freedom and peace. We need to notice again the metaphors in Scripture that speak about church: church is a body, with many parts functioning interactively; church is a bride waiting for her husband; church is a family relating to a Father in heaven. Church is definitely not a corporation.

That is not to say church leaders should only BE and not also DO. It is to say that being precedes doing. Only a healthy body can be active and a loving bride a worthy helper. Only when a family has a strong sense of itself can it become a successful family business.

Mobilizing versus "being with"

After Jesus' resurrection his position vis-a-vis the church was transformed. He was no longer "with" his disciples as a physical presence. He was no longer teaching them by example what he hoped they would learn to do also. He was no longer the servant teaching the community about servanthood. Now Jesus was King of kings, Lord of Lords. Now his position was over the disciples as head of the church, rather than with the disciples as teacher, servant and friend.

But of course Jesus declared that someone else would take his place to be with us. The Holy Spirit who equips us to do the works Jesus did is given to live within us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the church, including its leaders, can be like Jesus – just as close to the Father as he was; just as anointed for service; just as characterized by love and forgiveness. It is now the Holy Spirit who will "teach us all things." The Holy Spirit will lead us to do the works Jesus did, in his name.

It is not easy for pastors of the Christian Reformed Church to refrain from seeing themselves as having the task to mobilize the congregations they are called to serve do more. In fact, the idea that a pastor is "called to serve a church" already suggests doing more than it suggests being with. However, all members of a congregation, including its pastor, are first of all invited to be intimate with Jesus, and through him with their Father in heaven.

Perhaps a pastor's most important task is to take the lead in demonstrating how to be within a fellowship intent on becoming a well-functioning body with Christ as its head; to take the lead in demonstrating what it takes for a community to become that bride ready to meet her husband; to experience him or herself as one of the Father's children who knows him intimately, and is through that knowledge therefore closely identified with what he or she sees his or her father doing in the world. Perhaps a pastor can take the lead in being with people of a congregation, being intent on waiting with them while praying and petitioning God for the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into a body that wants to be ready to see what the Lord will do.

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Church

Dumbing down profession of faith

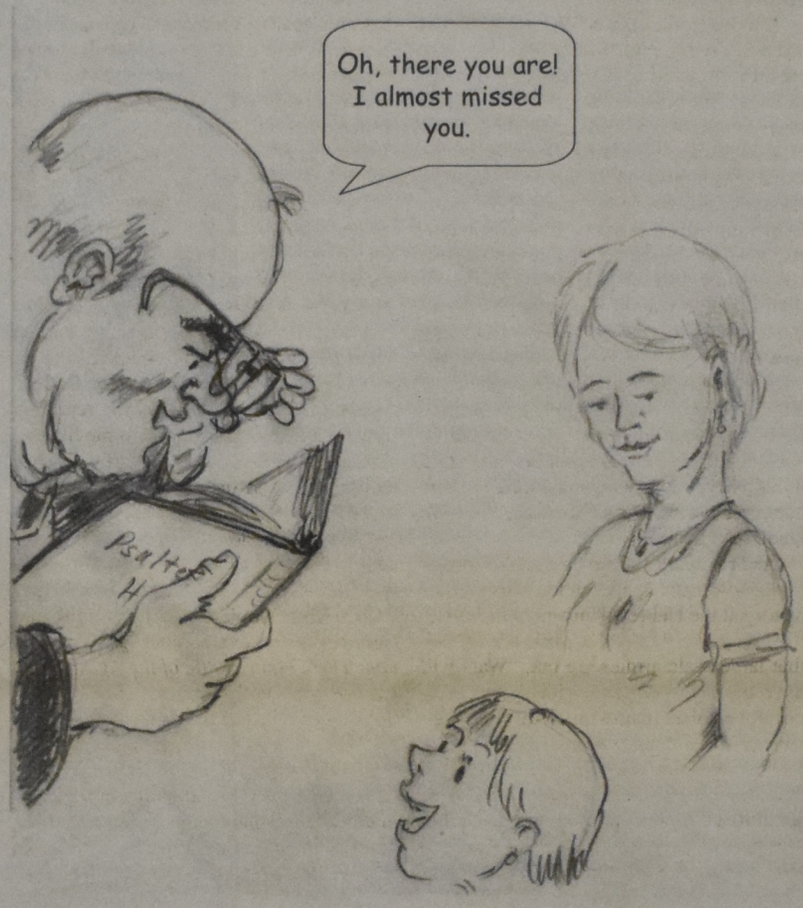
Tymen Hofman

The Bible tells us that whoever believes in his heart and professes with his mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord is saved and has eternal life. So the professing of one's faith is at the very heart of being a Christian. Therefore it is not surprising that Reformed churches have always required a profession of faith as the way to becoming a fully-participant member of the church, with all of its privileges and responsibilities.

Historically profession of faith by baptized members of the congregation has taken place over a rather wide age range. Some young people might come forward at the rather young age of 13 or 14 years. They were usually the more mature and active individuals in whom there was a clear commitment to participate in the full fellowship of the church. That involved a keen desire to partake of the Lord's Supper.

But generally speaking the youth of the church would come to such commitment in the course of catechetical instruction which, when completed, involved a call to repentance and faith, and a profession of that faith. Profession of faith required a basic insight into the knowledge of faith and the potential to assume the responsibilities of full church membership. There were always exceptions for any person who might be mentally handicapped but still able to participate in the sacrament.

A few believers have always found it nigh impossible to take the step of full commitment. I once had the privilege of witnessing the profession of faith of two of my Montana fishing buddies. They were grandfathers but had never experienced the assurance of faith which they deemed necessary to a profession of it. Consequently they missed out on about 50 years of fellowship at the Lord's table. Their first communion was the highlight of their life in the church and was instrumental in developing in them the assurance they had always been seeking.



Children at the Lord's Supper

But then things changed. There was a mid-20th century movement in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands to admit children to the Lord's Supper and that found its way to our side of the ocean as well. Eventually the synod of the CRC was soon being overtured to allow children at the Lord's table. That resulted in a committee being assigned to study the matter, evenly weighted between US and Canadian members. The argument for allowing children to attend was very simple – children are members of the covenant and of the church and therefore they should be allowed to partake of the sacrament, with no conditions. The other half of the committee contended that no one should come to the Lord's Supper without having made a profession of faith.

The committee came to synod totally deadlocked, and synod, finding no way to resolve the issue rationally, decided, at the suggestion of one person, to allow children to partake of the sacrament but to require of them, even at age five or six, to make a profession of faith. The grounds for so doing are, essentially, non-existent. With this each side got what it wanted, formally.

This was possibly one of the worst decisions a CRC synod ever made, and we have been living with its fall-out ever since. Consistories must now muddle through as best they can in trying to apply this half-baked regulation. In the course of it all, much has been lost of the real significance of public profession of faith.

There were repercussions of course, and synod did appoint a later committee to study ways to deal with those who make profession of faith at a young age so as to bring them to a responsible acceptance of membership responsibilities. Whatever constitutes a responsible taking of membership vows now seems to be dealt with in the confines of an elders meeting, for it never results in a public ceremony or even an announcement in the bulletin. I suspect in many cases such children never come to the commitment of taking responsibility as members of the church.

A faith requirement

The upshot of all this is that children are allowed to make a profession of faith when they do not know what they are doing and thus are robbed of the very meaningful rite of passage, namely, to do public profession of faith at the "age of discretion," as we used to call it. It is the time in life when one is beginning to see things a bit clearly, including the truths of the faith, and able to understand what is involved in personal commitment. That does not come before puberty, for sure, and likely not until a few years after.

Now you may be concluding that I am arguing against children at communion but I am not. I am arguing against the profession of faith requirement.

Nor am I conceding to just allowing all baptized children to join in taking some bread and wine so they don't feel left out. I would still have a faith requirement for participation.

I would set two requirements for partaking of the body and blood of Christ – an expressed desire to do so, and evidence in the life of the child that he or she has faith in the Lord. Our children believe in Jesus, love him, and pray earnestly. And their parents are aware of their faith.

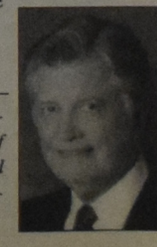
I would suggest that when believing children express the desire to participate that the parents should inform the elders who, upon visiting the family, would concur in such a request, that the privilege be granted and the congregation be so informed. Subsequently, such faithful young members should be called to publicly profess their faith in order to become fully participating members of the church. Should they refuse to do so, the privilege of the Lord's Supper should be denied them. That would help to keep some discipline in the life of the congregation.

Learning from the Catholic Church

Now I am not posturing as some wise churchman who has figured this all out. I'm only going back to the church we left in the Reformation, where children were admitted to the sacrament by being granted their First Communion privileges and later introduced to the rights and responsibilities of full membership by way of Confirmation. I'm just arguing for a Reformed adaptation of the wisdom of the Roman Catholic Church in including its youth in church membership.

Having said all this, I must admit I am not keen on early communion for very practical reasons. One of the big problems in our faith-life is becoming bored by what we do routinely. I suspect that early communion only aids and abets the tendency to become bored by what ought to be a marvelous experience – that of taking by faith the very body and blood of Christ.

For the same reason I would not resist returning to celebrating the Lord's Supper about four or six times per year with a good preparatory sermon at least once a year. More isn't always better. The sacrament does not work a certain magic in our lives by simple participation – it requires faith and faithfulness on the part of each of us struggling with our sin and failure and grasping for the life-line of faith and hope.



Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired miniser of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Opinion

Yes . . . but

Did you see John McCallum, Canada's minister of defense, on television a few weeks ago? Did you hear him? His drone alone could make him a fortune by selling CDs of his sleep-inducing voice. Even the most confirmed insomniac would snore in a few minutes listening to him. At any rate, he wants to reform the Canadian army. Speaking as a former soldier, I laud his ambition. I served my country for 18 months with distinction (by this I mean that I had more reprimands and furloughs canceled than any other of my colleagues); yet, I managed to attain the rank of sergeant within a year. That's the army for you. Ottawa now spends some $13 billion dollars and can field only 20,000 battle ready troops. McCallum wants to get more bang for his bucks, but generals are a conservative lot. They routinely prepare for the last war, which was supposed to be against Russia, a war where heavy tanks were needed and nuclear submarines and billion dollar bombers and super expensive aircraft carriers. But we have a new world and the war on terrorism needs none of that hardware. We need new transport planes to ferry our troops to the remote corners of the earth, because, like their helicopters, Canada's Hercules are 40 years old. Would your local police allow you to drive a 40 year old car? McCallum is calling for a more flexible and adaptable army. He intends to start his reform right at the top, cutting down the bureaucracy at defense Head Quarters in Ottawa. Ten percent of our 'defence' budget is spent on paper shovers. That buys a lot of infantry personnel. One thing the top guns – both in Ottawa and at the Pentagon – are good at is fighting politicians, so it takes guile, patience and determination to break the back of an ingrained system.

Rummy reshuffled

Ask Donald Rumsfeld, McCallum's oh so smart USA counterpart, a master of the spoken word, a super spin doctor, who created quite an uproar in Washington last week. Rumsfeld wrote a memo to four senior staff members in the Pentagon and leaked it to the press.In it he questioned the effectiveness of the war in Iraq, for which he had written the blueprint. There was a reason for this. He wanted to limit the damage done to his reputation, because without being consulted, President George W. Bush reshuffled the deck – slipping in National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice over him on Iraq and Afghanistan.Now he is singing a new tune. Quote: "DoD (Department of Defense) has been organized, trained and equipped to fight big armies, navies and air forces." True, no one country has these anymore. So he proposes a new sort of army, "one that seamlessly focuses the capabilities of several departments and agencies on this key problem of terrorism." Aha. A new agency. More money. More reorganization, a special Rumsfeld baby, but, unless the old is phased out, the new will not take root: you can't have two competing systems. And that abolish the old-style army won't go.

But, he's got a point. We see daily that the wars raging in the Middle East have only produced mixed results: bin Laden is still at large, still plotting the next big one, the Iraqis are becoming bolder by the day and fighting terror with terror in Israel is just futile. September 11 acted as a warning. Here we are: two years further, in a new world not only militarily, but also economically and ecologically. Also in our day-to-day business transactions the old answers don't work anymore. The same is true for our approach to nature. There, too, radically new thinking is needed. The world has changed. Will the army? Will the economy? Will our way of life? The military machine faces the same dilemma as our economy: we all have to use less resources. The same holds true for our ecological problems: love nature as ourselves or face extinction. We know the answer.

And so do the military brass. As far back as 1990 Martin Van Crefeld, who teaches history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, wrote in *The Transformation of War* that large scale armies are out. "Wars will have more in common with struggles of primitive tribes than with large scale conventional war that the world has seen since 1970.... Weapons will become less, rather than more sophisticated, waged not in air-conditioned rooms, pushing buttons, rather the 'troops' may well have more in common with policemen (or with pirates), with battles not taking place in the open field but in complex environments, either those provided by nature – I think of the mountains in Afghanistan – or else the even more complex environments created by man. (The narrow streets of Baghdad come to mind). It will be a war of listening devices and of car bombs, of men killing each other at close quarters, and of women using their purses to carry explosives. It will be protracted, bloody and horrible."So, John McCallum, Donald Rumsfeld, "Are you ready for that sort of war, now being waged in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Gaza strip, Tel Aviv, New York, Jerusalem? Are you ready to say goodbye to your floating airports, your B1 bombers, your screaming jet fighters, all useless in the new war?Or will the dollar to be made by the mighty Military-Industrial complex prove more powerful by preventing fundamental reform?If both MacCallum and Rumsfeld succeed in streamlining the war machine, and break the back of the vested interests there, then there is also hope for the other, even more necessary reforms.Can we expect such a reform? That depends on the philosophy and outlook of the people in power. What do they think? Where do they come from?

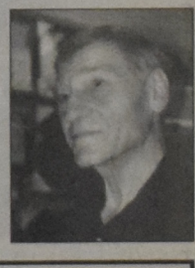
Here is a glimpse which reflects, of course, my biased view of the situation at hand. So, for this purpose I will connect Bush, Boykin and Babylon to the Bible. You know Bush, of course. More about him later. Boykin is not quite a household name, at least in Canada. A three star general in the American army, highly decorated, former commander of the mysterious Delta force, he now serves as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, and is in charge at the Pentagon of finding Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

This fighting man is also a soldier for his heavenly Lord. He's been making the rounds at different church meetings and prayer groups in Southern USA, where he tells the faithful that terrorism is a conflict in which the real enemy is a guy named Satan, most perfectly represented in those two fellows, Saddam and bin Laden. America, he says, embodies the real God fighting a false idol. Sounds to me like the Crusades all over again, setting us back a thousand years. And Babylon? It is named in the Bible about 300 times, always in a bad sense. Babylon also occupies a prominent place in a series of books, known as the 'Left Behind' volumes, of which fifty five million copies have been sold, not counting its newest, number 11, *Armageddon: The Cosmic Battle of the Ages,* which has just appeared in print.

"Rapture" is the key theme here, a teaching I detest as no other. For the uninitiated, it signifies the moment when 'true' Christian believers will be taken up, or 'raptured', into heaven, while the godless are 'left behind' on this wicked earth. The implication of a wicked earth is that God failed when he created the world, so polluting it actually is a good thing. After all, heaven is the goal.In these books a Nicolae Carpathia, heading the United Nations, is seen as the Antichrist. One of the conditions upon which this Mr Carpathia accepted his appointment as Secretary general of the U.N. was to disarm the world, move to one world currency and world government under the U.N., and relocate its headquarters to Iraq, where Babylon, in Iraq, is to be rebuilt. The authors of these books, Rev. Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, base all this on their reading of Revelation, the last and most apocalyptic book of the Bible. They write that a rebuilt Babylon will be a great city in the end times, serving as the commercial and religious capital for Antichrist. Their interpretation also indicates that, like Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon will be destroyed in the ultimate Holy War, hence the title: *Armageddon, the cosmic battle of all ages.*

These popular books, written 'entirely based on the Bible' – in their view – also feature the Euphrates, a river frequently mentioned in the book of Revelation. There the Bible text states that four fallen angels are being held at the Euphrates river awaiting the appointed time for them to lead forth a host of demons to destroy one-third of the world's peoples. The "Left Behind' authors and their supporters believe that something important and evil is occurring there in the end times. So with Iraq -- Babylon -- and the Euphrates river daily on the front page in this holy war, General Boykin tells his audiences that God wanted Bush as president at this time, feeding into this notion of the US as God's instrument in world history. Many fundamentalist Christians are convinced that with events now taking place in the Middle East and centering around Babylon the stage is being set for the armies of the Antichrist to reach Israel, and wage the final battle against Christ. So they exert a lot of pressure on the current administration to be pro-Israel. The "Left Behind" books, together with the study guides and childrens' versions have a tremendous popular impact. They explain the suspicion of many Christians over toward the UN, because they see it as a stepping stone to the world rule of the Antichrist.Bush, Boykin, Babylon and the Bible. A dangerous mix when the Bible is interpreted as a book of history, past or present or an indicator for the future. The Bible is none of that. In essence it is a book of love: love for all creatures, and love for creation, humanity's permanent home, never to be abandoned in favor of a heaven about which the bible says not much, except that God lives in inapproachable light and that nobody has seen God or will see God.

Back to Bush, who wants to be re-elected. Of course. For this he needs the Christian Right, which comprises 40 percent of the Republican Party and is its best organized segment. For many of them, Iraq is not only a just war, a war of liberation, it is also part of the end-of-the-world battle between the children of light and the children of darkness. So by invading Iraq, Bush not only pleases his oil-rich friends but also the core of his supporting constituency.



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario

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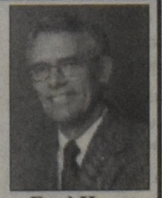

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Advertisers: Don't miss out on this special opportunity to reach our readers with Christmas greetings and information about your business or ministry.
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Birthday

Happy 80th Birthday!
November 16, 2003

Margaret C. Knibbe

We thank God for the blessing you have been to Dad, your family, friends, and acquaintances.

Congratulations from:
Rita & Gary Aalbers
Norman & Joni Knibbe
Harry & Alda Knibbe
Darlene & Graham Barraclough
Marvin & Anita Knibbe
21 grandchildren

Correspondence:c/o G. Barraclough
201 Bock St, PO Box 213
New Dundee ON NOB 2E0

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who celebrated my 80th birthday with cards, best wishes and by attending my open house on Nov. 1st.
What a lovely surprise!
Thank you especially to my family – children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren – for making this such a special event.
Most of all I thank our Lord for His faithfulness and His many blessings.

Mrs. Joyce Haanstra

For Rent

Large **1 Bedroom Apartment** in Executive Town House, Mohawk Road West, **Hamilton.** On bus route, Gas Fireplace, AC, incl. utilities & cable - $650. Available January 1, 2004. Call after 6 p.m. **905-304-6543** Email: deboerh@hhsc.ca

Martin Grove - Rexdale Boulevard, **Toronto** area. Bright **2 bedroom** basement **apartment.** Newly renovated, separate entrance, laundry, utilities incl. $925/mo. Non-smoking, no pets. Call: **416-251-6649**

Allanburg - 2 Bedroom apt. in duplex. Available Dec. 1. Call Joanne at **905-227-4289** Email: joanneg@iaw.on.ca

Anniversaries

1953 November 20 2003

HERMAN AND JEAN SINGOR (nee Veenstra)

We hope to celebrate, with our children and grandchildren
Open House
Saturday Nov. 22, 2003
2 - 4 p.m.
First Chr. Ref. Church
25 Tweedsmuir Avenue East
Chatham Ontario

Home Address: 31 Joplyn Rd. Chatham ON N7M 5J4

1948, Sneek, Holland November 29 Abbotsford, BC, 2003

We as the children and grandchildren have been blessed with parents that provided a home of humor and lots of love.
With praise and thanksgiving to God, we joyfully announce the **55th Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

JOHN (Jan) AND THERESA (Tietje) BOERSMA (nee Wester)

Love from your children and grandchildren:
Art & Liz Boersma, *Surrey, BC*
Catherine, Chris and Elly
Jo-Ann & Gary Bomhof, *Drayton, ON*
Jer (& Cathy), Teresa (& Paul), David & Alesha
and great-grandson Brendan
Jack & Bernita Boersma, *New Westminster, BC*
Heather, Johnathan, Matt and Stephen

Home address: 35310 McCorkell Drive, Abbotsford BC V3G 2C3

1953 September 24 2003

BERT AND MARIE VANDENBERG

With thankfulness to God, we recently celebrated the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents.
We pray that God may continue to be with them.
Marilyn & Dick Kuiperij - Jon, Heidi, Annette, *Woodville ON*
Patricia, *Smith Falls ON*
Phil & Jannetta VandenBerg - Stephanie, Ian, Andrew, *Richmond Hill,ON*
Bernice & Henry Steenbergen - Melinda, Dan, Josh, Benj, *Richmond Hill,ON*
Bruce & Sharon VandenBerg - Christopher, Jason, William, Ellen, *Oakwood,ON*

Home address: RR 1 Oakwood ON K0M 2M0

Five Generations

Recently "four generations" flew to Abbotsford B.C. to have this five-generation picture taken with Mrs. Ann Oostenbrink who is 101 years old. Each of the five are the oldest in their families. Pictured are:
Mrs. Ann Oostenbrink (1902), Abbotsford BC
Mrs. Jantina Pol (1930), Nepean ON
Mrs. Catherine Byl (1954), Hamilton ON
Mrs. Hannah Braam (1979), Listowel ON
Mr. Zachary Braam (2003), Listowel ON

"We are so thankful to God for his faithfulness through all generations. We give him the praise that we were able to make this trip and spend time with Zachary's great-great oma who was in wonderful spirits! We feel very blessed."

Obituaries

On September 29, 2003 the Lord took to himself

NIESJE VAN GELDEREN

in her 77th year.
Sadly missed by her faithful friend,
Henry Pennings, *H.C.H. Brampton,ON*
her sisters & brothers:
A. Van Gelderen, *Amsterdam,The Neth.*
Linda Van Gelderen, *Ackini,Switzerland*
Joanne & Mike Tulp, *Orillia,ON*
Garry & Ann Van Gelderen, *Ohio,USA*
nieces & nephews
The funeral service was held Oct 2.

Correspondence address:
345 Grenville Ave, Orillia ON L3V 2Y2

August 12,1937 October 13, 2003
Nes, Friesland Kitchener, Ontario

ELISABETH (Betty) HOEKSTRA
nee Boelens

From our hands and lives we surrender into the hands of our loving God, our dear wife, mother and beppe after a lengthy battle with cancer. Betty died peacefully at home, surrounded by her family.

Beloved wife of William (Bill)
Loving mother of:
Rick & Eileen Hoekstra
Jody Adams
Ron & Anita Hoekstra
Anita & Colin DeHaan
Frank & Marlene Hoekstra
Jim & Denise Hoekstra
& 19 grandchildren all of *Kitchener ON*
Sister to
Menno & Jenny Boelens, *Guelph*
Wes & Grace Boelens, *Wyoming*
Sister-in-law of
Tini Hoekstra, *Sarnia*
Andy & Jenny Hoekstra, *Sarnia*
John Hoekstra & Linda, *Forest*
Allan & Gertie Hoekstra, *Oil Springs*
Frances & Harry Boers, *Wyoming*
Alice & Co VanderLaan, *Edmonton*
Greta & Jack Holtzhauer, *Kitchener*
Also survived by
Tina VanHouten, *Brampton*
Jim & Kaaren Damsma, *Kitchener*

Predeceased by her parents
Ronald & Audrey Boelens,
sister-in-law Francis Boelens
brothers-in-law Bob Williams
and Dick Hoekstra

Betty was a committed member of the Community Christian Reformed Church and a treasured volunteer at both her church and Laurentian Hills Christian School.

Correspondence: B. Hoekstra
34 Kingswood Drive
Kitchener ON N2E 1A7

August 12, 1937 October 13, 2003
Nes Kitchener

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

On October 13 our Lord and Savior called home our dear sister

BETTY HOEKSTRA (nee Boelens)

Menno & Jenny Boelens, *Guelph ON*
Wes & Grace Boelens, *Wyoming ON*
and their children

The service was held on October 16 in the Community CRC in Kitchener.

Suddenly and peacefully, on October 12, 2003, our Heavenly Father took home

HENOCH (Hank) HENNEVELD

at the age of 71.
He is survived by his loving wife Jenny. Dear father and opa to:
Dorothy & Meg
Lucinda & Alan
Logan, Geneva, Bronwyn
Elizabeth & William - Rebecca, Kevin, Hannah, Eric, Sarah
Monique & Randal

He will be deeply missed by all of us.
Home address:
#110 - 3080 Townline Rd
Abbotsford BC V2T 5M2

Psalm 16:11
You have made known to me
the path of life;
You will fill me with joy
in your presence,
with eternal pleasures
at your right hand.

1903 2003

On Sunday, Oct. 6, 2003 the Lord took unto himself our beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather

HERMAN STORTEBOOM

in his 101st year.
Beloved husband of
the late Hendrikje (2002).
Will be missed by his children
Joan & Philip Degans
Klaas & Alice Storteboom
Gertie & Henk Nyhoff
Ralph & Vivian Storteboom
11 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren
Predeceased by grandson Eric Degans.

The funeral and memorial service was held on Oct. 31, 2003 at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton. Rev. H. Praamsma officiated.
Correspondence: c/o K. Storteboom
Box 179, Belgrave ON N0G 1E0

"The Lord is my Shepherd
I shall not want." Psalm 23

On October 11, 2003 our Lord and Savior called home our dearly loved mom, oma great-oma, and great-great-oma

KLAASJE (Karen) SCHOLTEN

in her 94th year.
Dearly loved wife of the late Jacob Scholten. Predeceased by her twin daughters, one son, one grandaughter, and one great-grandson.

Dear mother of:
John & Tiny Scholten, *Bradford*
Herb & Shirley Scholten, *Meaford*
Hennie & Richard Van Dyke,*Owen Sound*
Ralph & Pat Scholten, *Springdale*
Be & Joyce Scholten, *Orangeville*
Dagmar Scholten, *Bond Head*
Jack & Theresa Scholten, *Moorefield*
Mary & Ralph Mulder, *Wainfleet*
Murray Scholten & Teresa, *Palmerston*
Albert & Shirley Scholten, *Drayton*
Dear oma of 59 grandchildren
59 great-grandchildren and
3 great-great-grandchildren.

The Memorial Service was held Wednesday Oct. 15, 2003 at 2:30 p.m. at Holland Christian Homes. Interment at Brampton Memorial Gardens. Rev. H. Praasma officiated.
Correspondence: Hennie Van Dyke
RR #5 Owen Sound ON N4K 5N7

Job Opportunities

Full-time Position Available:
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALEM CHRISTIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
announces the planned retirement
of its Executive Director, Rev. Albert Dreise,
as of **May 2004**

Position Purpose:
The Position of the Executive Director serves to provide leadership necessary to assure the successful operation and achievement of annual and long-term goals for Salem Christian Mental Health Association. The purpose of Salem is to support healing communities in the development of mental health care services and to provide leadership in the care and comfort of people who are emotionally distressed.

Job Description:
The position will emphasize co-ordination and program development and developing a close relationship with the support community. (see: **www.salem.on.ca** for details)

Qualifications:
- A vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ and His church
- Knowledge/skills normally acquired through formal education on the masters level and responsible experience in a position of leadership within a similar agency
- Experience in delivering spiritual & mental health care
- Ability to travel extensively
- Familiarity and appreciation of the Reformed faith tradition a requirement

Send applications by Jan. 15, 2004 to:

Salem Christian Mental Health Association
1 Young St., Suite 512, Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8
Fax: 905-528-3562 or E-mail: salem@salem.on.ca

No phone calls please. We thank all applicants for their interest. However, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The board of " THE LIBERATION CHOIR " is accepting applications for the position of:

MARKETING AND PROMOTION COORDINATOR.

This part time (50%) position will be on a contract basis.

THE PERSON HIRED WILL HE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION AND EXECUTION OF A PLAN WITH THE FOLLOWING INGREDIENTS:

1) Long term sponsorship and fund raising.
2) Increase membership and maintaining present membership
3) Concert marketing
4) Create a plan for the choir to be in the public eye on a structural basis

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE SHOULD HAVE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS:

1) Excellent sales abilities
2) Familiarity with media promotion methods
3) Skills in business administration, data basis, computers, processing, poster design.
4) Excellent verbal and written communication skills
5) Must be able to travel
6) Be very enthusiastic with the "product"
7) Be willing to provide reports on request and work with the board

Please send your resume to: gpkalverda@hotmail.com

Use our forum to discuss issues and articles in the christian courier.
Go go www.christiancourier.ca and click on **FORUM**.

Langley (BC) Christian Elementary School
(Grades K-6 with 350 students)
is accepting applications for
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Position begins August 2004
Relevant experience required;
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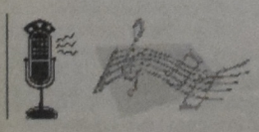
preferred
For more information go to
www.langleychristian.ca
or contact:
Rudy Ydenberg, Search Committee Chair
c/o 21789-50th Avenue,
Langley, BC, V3A 3T2
Ph. 604.533.2222

ZINGEND GELOVEN



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AM 1320 & AM 710

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

in **Aylmer**, invites applications for an opening in our grade 5/6 classroom due to an maternity leave **beginning Feb. 2004**.
Applicants must be qualified teachers who clearly demonstrate a love for God, children, and teaching. Ability to teach French at the Intermediate level would be considered an asset. Please send complete resumes to:

Marianne Vangoor
Immanuel Christian School
75 Caverly Rd., Aylmer, Ont. N5H 2P6

Dordt College

Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

Criminal Justice Develop and teach in an interdisciplinary criminal justice program. Qualified applicants should have a background in criminal justice, criminology, sociology, or related field.

Education Special education. Ed.D or Ph.D preferred.

Environmental Studies Teach introductory and upper level Environmental Studies courses. Coordinate and direct the program, possibly teach course(s) in Biology, Earth Science, and/or Agriculture. Ph.D. required.

Health, Physical Education, Recreation (HPER) Teach a variety of HPER major and activity courses and coaching duties yet to be determined.

Psychology Teach introductory psychology and upper level courses in the area of counseling psychology.

Social Work Generalist; micro-practice background; methods courses and field practice.

Spanish Teach elementary, intermediate, and upper level courses in Spanish language, literature, and culture.

Theatre Arts Set design and teaching.

Theology General education courses in biblical theology and upper level biblical studies courses.

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-4496 E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is a vibrant inter-denominational school serving the Christian community of **BRAMPTON**. We serve 330 students from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 8. We are looking for an **intermediate teacher** to cover a maternity leave position from January 2004 through to June 2004 with specialties in the areas of Science and French.
If you are interested in guiding students in understanding God's world through Science and His people through French, send your resume to **boelens@bramptonjkcs.org** or to

Ed Boelens John Knox Christian School
82 McLaughlin Rd S.,Brampton, Ontario L6Y 2C7
For more information on our school visit our website at
www.bramptonjkcs.org

OTTAWA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking qualified applicants for a definite opening for an **80% French position** in the primary grades. This is a maternity leave position that will commence on January 26, 2004. If you love Christ and his children, have an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, a Christian School Teacher's Certificate or their equivalents and are interested in being part of a dynamic and growing team of educators we look forward to hearing from you.
Please send your resume and a statement of faith to:

Paul Triemstra, Principal
Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario K2A 1P6
Tel: (613) 722-5836
Fax: (613) 722-5836
Email: paul@ocschool.org
Website: www.ocschool.org

Job Opportunity / Miscellaneous

YOUTH DIRECTOR/PASTOR

The three Christian Reformed Churches of **Sarnia**,Ontario are seeking a **full time Youth Director/Pastor** to continue aunique and exciting combined youth ministry. Solid programming & commiteed volunteer leadership is already in place. Candidate must have strong relational and administrative skills plus the desire and ability to lead and equip our youth, helping them to grow in faith and service to our Lord. Please send resume and inquiries to:

Art Capelle, 2261Confederation, Sarnia ON N7T-7H3
Ph: 519-337-4660 or email: artc@rivernet.net

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Miscellaneous/Advertising

Back to God Hour announces cutbacks

Chicago, Illinois - A serious revenue shortfall last year and during the first quarter of this fiscal year has led to staff cuts and a scaling back of radio and television ministry by the Back to God Hour, the electronic media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

Executive Director Calvin Bremer said today that the BTGH experienced a revenue shortfall during fiscal 2002/03 that resulted in a deficit of revenue to expense of $604,000 as of June 30,2003. During the first three months of fiscal 2003/04, the BTGH experienced a further revenue shortfall of $246,000 compared to its projected budget.

As a result of these deficits, Bremer said, the BTGH has examined its ministry priorities and strategies and has instituted a number of measures to reduce expenses. The departments most affected will be the English-language radio and English-language television departments.

The English-language radio ministry will be reducing its station coverage in North America and limiting the print resources it offers at no cost. English-language television is reducing the amount of broadcast monies spent and will scale back the production of new "Primary Focus" programs by nearly half during the next year.

As a result of the decision to scale back production of television programming, the BTGH has identified four positions that will be eliminated effective Oct. 31, 2003, Bremer said. The employees affected have been offered severance packages.

Bremer asked supporters of the Back to God Hour to remember in prayer these employees who have faithfully served the ministry, as well as their families, especially during in these days of transition.

In addition, he asked people to pray for the Back to God Hour's continuing ministries in the face of an economic downturn that has affected revenues for many ministries. The mission mandate to bring the gospel to the whole world continues to guide and propel the BTGH, he said, and it remains committed to the effective use of the resources God provides through the stewardship of His people.

THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1 Burlington ON L7R 3Y8

Radio- From Coast to Coast

Web:www.backtogod.net/

BRITISH COLUMBIA		
Burns Lake – CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos – CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton – CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni – CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George – CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton – CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers – CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland – CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon – CJIB	9:30 pm	94
ALBERTA		
Brooks – CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray – CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River – CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370
SASKATCHEWAN		
Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190
MANITOBA		
Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810
ONTARIO		
Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham – CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - FM	7:30 am	93
Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing – CKAP	7:00 am	580
London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30am	920
NEW BRUNSWICK		
Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND		
Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630
NOVA SCOTIA		
Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby – CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax – CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney – CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth – CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor – CFAB	8:30 am	1450

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Nov 22 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. First Christian Reformed Church, 33 Shirley Ave., **Barrie**. Freewill offering. (519)637-4357

Nov 29 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Providence United Reformed Church, 447 Second St., **Strathroy**. Freewill offering. (519)637-4357

Nov. 29 **Musica Sacra Chorus** presents "Glory to God" with director Johann Van Ittersum and Elise Vanderspek at Emmanuel Reformed Church, **Woodstock**, 8:00 p.m. More info, call: Johann Van Ittersum at 519-863-6462. See ad this issue.

Nov 30 **Dutch Service** at the **Ancaster** CRC. 3 p.m. Rev H. VanderPlaat preaching

Nov 30 **Dutch Community Christmas Song Service,** 7:30 p.m. at the Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock,** ONRev. Roeland Hartmans officiatingBabysitting provided Refreshments served after the service

Dec 5, 6,7 **Bethel** CRC **of Lacombe, Alberta**, 50th anniversary - weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship. All former and present members and friends are invited. For info, call: Eleanor Wildeboer at 403-782-2602 or e-mail wilelwildeboer@aol.com (See ad this issue)

Dec 6 **Pro Musica Choir**, *Brent Fifield conductor, BruceKirkpatrick- Hill, Organ.* **A Christmas Proclamation.** 8.00 PM. Wellington Square United Church,2121 Caroline St. **Burlington** ON. For info call: 905 632 1347 or visit www.promusicachoir.org

Dec 13 **Musica Sacra Chorus** presents "Glory to God" with director Johann Van Ittersum and accompanist Elise Vanderspek at Calvary Christian Reformed Church, **Flamborough**, 8 p.m. For info, call: Johann Van Ittersum at 519-863-6462. See ad this issue

Dec 14 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas.** Freewill offering for Christmas Care & Salvation Army. For info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 20 **Musica Sacra Chorus** presents "Glory to God" at Norwich United Church, **Norwich**, 8 p.m. Director Johann Van Ittersum and accompanist Elise Vanderspek. Call Johann Van Ittersum at 519-863-6462 for information. See ad this issue.

Jan 17 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m Wallaceburg Christian Reformed Church, 150 Bruinsma Ave., Wallaceburg. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

April 10 **Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of South Western Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Ticket: $13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrickk@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.

May 2 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas.** Free will offtering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

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Liberia continues to be ravaged by lawless forces as people await UN peacekeepers

In mid October, a Liberian business magnate, Charles Gyude Bryant, was sworn in as chairman of an interim government. Bryant is expected to oversee reconstruction of a nation that has been badly damaged by 14 years of civil conflict. But, reports AANA Correspondent, Nernlor Gruduah, the task ahead of Bryant's administration can only begin in earnest after the remaining marauding bands of fighters are completely disarmed.

Fears expressed by American religious leaders and politicians that Muslim rebels could take over Liberia have abated, following the installation of a new interim leader, Charles Gyude Bryant, on Oct. 14.

A Christian and businessman, Bryant took over from caretaker president, Moses Blah, who held the post after former president, Charles Taylor, his immediate boss, stepped down on August 11 and went into exile in Nigeria.

Bryant was elected by government and rebel delegates on August 18, following more than two months of negotiations at a peace conference in Accra, Ghana, brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Religious leaders and civil society representatives also attended the negotiations.

During this period, a rebel movement, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), besieged the capital, Monrovia, raining down a barrage of mortars, which killed more than 4,000 people, and destroyed a significant part of the city.

LURD is made up largely of Guineans, most of whom have been living in Liberia as economic migrants and petty traders. Some came in as political refugees.

The rebel group sprang from a faction led by Alhaji Kromah – himself a naturalised Liberian from Guinea – during the first seven years of the Liberian civil war, started by Taylor in 1989.

Taylor won elections in 1997, but his former allies soon returned to the bush.

LURD was armed by the US and Britain to punish Taylor out for his alleged support for Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for diamonds.

The two countries also sponsored a UN resolution that slapped arms and economic sanctions on his government in 2000.

Taylor was further indicted by a UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone as soon as the Liberian peace talks opened in Ghana on June 4.

But after 14 years of bloodletting that has claimed more than 200,000 lives, the country of which Bryant assumed leadership has its entire infrastructure and every facet of life lying in ruins. At the moment, only about 4,000 troops of a promised 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force are deployed in and around Monrovia.

Bryant's interim power-sharing government is mandated to run the war-shattered country until democratic elections are held in 2005 under UN supervision.

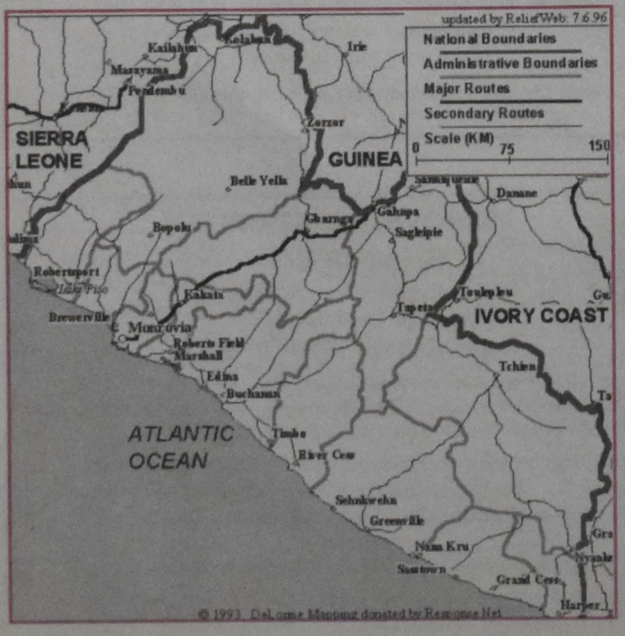
Rebels and militias

While there is relative peace in the capital, the countryside is roamed by gangs of rebel fighters and demoralised former government militias, making life intolerable for ordinary civilians.

With the departure of Taylor, LURD forces took advantage of poorly-equipped and discouraged government troops, and seized large tracts of territory in central Liberia from their bases in northern Lofa County.

A smaller rebel group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which split from LURD, controls parts of the south of the country, up to the port city of Buchanan, after invading from Ivory Coast in April.

Latest reports say LURD forces have been looting and burning down villages and towns in central Bong County, including the provincial town of Gbarnga, a former Taylor stronghold.



Eyewitnesses told reporters recently that the town is now virtually uninhabitable, after it was subjected to widespread destruction.

The Gbarnga area is home to the country's second referral health institution, Phoebe Hospital, and Cuttington University College, both of which have been reduced to shells.

Former government militias are also said to be terrorizing civilians in areas under their control.

About 50,000 displaced people fleeing atrocities are crammed into the town of Totota – midway between Gbarnga and Kakata – which serves as a buffer zone between peacekeepers and LURD rebels. Another 16,000 people are in the nearby town of Salala.

LURD rebels have also been attacking parts of Nimba County in the northeast, from the bordering Guinea, killing hundreds of civilians and burning towns and villages. Similar attacks are being carried out by MODEL rebels in the southeast of Nimba County.

The widespread pillaging, carnage and lawlessness underscore the cry of Liberians for speedy deployment of UN peacekeepers throughout the country.

Lyberian interim leader, Charles Gyude Bryant

UN sources say they hope to deploy more troops into the countryside by the end of the year. The huge task of reconstruction facing Bryant's administration can only begin in earnest when the UN takes complete control of the country, disarms and demobilizes marauding bands of fighters, numbering about 60,000.

Only then will Liberians' hopes that this time round a lasting peace is at hand, be realized.

Churches ponder future role as Liberia emerges from civil war

Chris Herlinger

Monrovia (ENI) – As a transitional government takes over in Liberia following a horrendous civil war, church leaders here are reflecting on the role of religious institutions in the new Liberia.

In a country where people commonly display their religious faith, many are asking why religious bodies did not do more to halt a two-decade long spiral into violence that ended in gruesome conflict.

Their questioning has continued after interim leader Gyude Bryant took office on October 14. Bryant was chosen by Liberia's warring factions to lead a transitional government after former President Charles Taylor went into exile in August.

The Liberian civil war, which is believed to have resulted in 200,000 deaths and to have uprooted 500,000 persons, pitted two guerrilla groups against the government of now-deposed Taylor, a Baptist who, some church figures said, used religion to bolster his rule and repeatedly manipulated religious bodies for his own purposes.

"Taylor was able to divide and rule," Benjamin D. Lartey, general secretary of the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC), told ENI in a recent interview. "We were divided and now we have to be united, as one body."

Political divisions did not fall into easy denominational categories: some evangelical Protestants and Pentecostals supported Taylor, but others did not; some liberal-to-moderate Protestants and Catholics took a public stance against Taylor, but some did not.

"Sometimes church leaders took the role of the 'opposition' almost by default," said the Rev. Kortu Brown, head of Concerned Christian Community (CCC), a Liberian relief and development agency.

Time to stand up

One of those who took a stand against Taylor was Michael Kpakala Francis, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Monrovia, whose outspokenness has been compared to that of Oscar Romero, the archbishop of El Salvador who stood up to an authoritarian regime (and was assassinated in 1980).

In a recent interview with ENI, Francis – expressly eschewing any comparisons with Romero – harshly criticized Taylor, describing him as a "pathological liar" and a "psychopath" who destroyed Liberia.

But while placing the responsibility for the civil war with Taylor, Francis maintained that the church itself had at best a mixed record when it came to standing up to the former president.

While some bodies such as the LCC and some church leaders spoke out against Taylor, "relatively few individual churches stood up," Francis said.

A culture of "passivity" had prevailed throughout Liberian society, including in the church, he continued, arguing that the problem would have to be addressed in the coming months and years.

For the LCC's Lartey, church leaders should be a source both of moral support for the new president and of prophetic criticism of the kind that might have done Liberia some good in the past.

"It's time," he said, "for the good people of Liberia to stand up."